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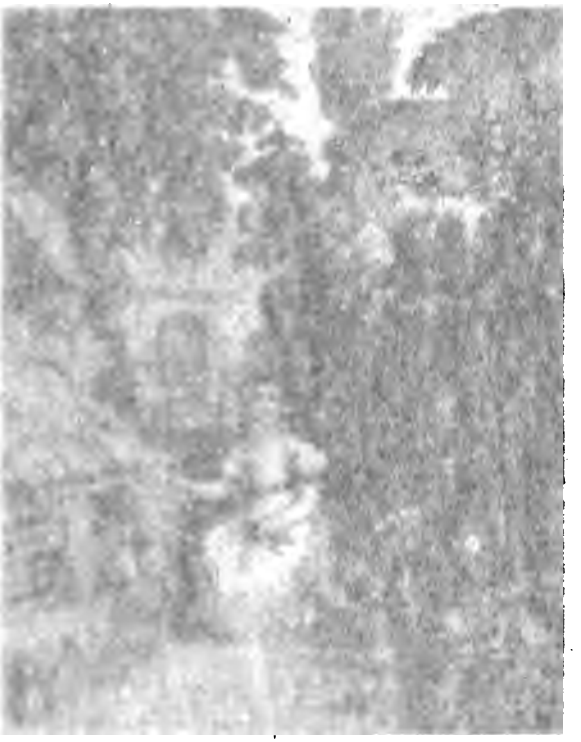

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THE WORKS OF Mrs SHERWOOD.

Uniform Edition.

Vol. VII.

MY AUNT KATE.

New York,

HARPER & BROTHERS.

1834.

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THE

WORKS

OF

MRS. SHERWOOD.

BEING

THE ONLY UNIFORM EDITION EVER PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES.

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NEW YORK:
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THE NUN.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is no form of religion on earth which has supplied so many scenes for romance as that of the great Roman Catholic apostacy; which, indeed, in the days of its exaltation, possessed much that is needful for rendering works of imagination most interesting to the mind of man, namely, power, and splendour, and the means of exciting the passions to the utmost—and, above all, mystery—intricate and unfathomable mystery—such as is emphatically denominated in Scripture, "the mystery of iniquity." Yet, although so many works of fancy have been formed with these materials, and in many instances with much success; and although history is filled with tragedies wrought in real life, by this same powerful and complicated machinery; I do not know where I could find any thing like a resemblance to the scenes which I am about to bring forward, in the many multiplied volumes of which the country I now inhabit has to boast. Madame de Genlis has, indeed, in one of her little dramas, betrayed some secrets of the nature of those that I am about to reveal, and which one would almost wonder how she should have dared to advert to, at the period in which her work appeared: but, with the exception of this little piece, I hardly know where else to find any thing like a representation of the interior of a convent, or even the slightest view of the various little low cabals which agitate the minds of those secluded females who have thus, unauthorized by Scripture, endeavoured to disengage themselves from the cares and business of active life; only, I fear, in most instances, to find, by sad experience, that their

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own hearts were far more dangerous companions than those which their heavenly Father provided for them, when he gave them their places in the great family of mankind.

I shall not trouble my reader with a very particular account of my early life. I am a native of Turin. I was brought up according to the strictest principles of the Roman Catholic faith, and entered into existence some years before those disturbances occurred in France, which have operated so mighty a change in many of the kingdoms of the continent of Europe. My fortune was respectable, and entirely in my own power. I was left an orphan in very early life; and the loss of an only and very dear sister, which took place about the time I came of age, acted so powerfully on my mind, that I felt myself strongly inclined to become a religieuse, or rather, I should say, a nun. I was, however, not disposed to leap before I looked, and therefore I resolved to become a pensionnaire, or boarder, in a convent, for a short time, before I decided on my future plans. It is not my intention to tell my family name; that which I received at my baptism was Cecile, my birth having taken place on Santa Cecilia's day; hence this santa was my patroness, and it was thought that she had not been unmindful of me, as I early exhibited some talent for music.

I know not that I had any other particular natural advantage, but I was not deficient in any way, and had therefore no temptation of that kind to withdraw myself from the world. I should add that, although brought up strictly, as it regarded the religion of my parents, I had received more intellectual improvement than most young ladies of my rank in my own country, where, I am sorry to say, our ladies knew very little at the period of which I speak. And thus, having presented myself to my reader, I trust that he will have no objection to follow me through the scenes into which I am about to introduce him. But it is not my intention to indulge his curiosity by giving the true name of the town near to which the events took place of which I am about to speak; but, to avoid confusion, I shall call it St. Siffren, from the appellation of the patron of its principal church.

It happened that I had a relation and schoolfellow married at St. Siffren, and that she wrote to invite me

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to visit her, as soon as she heard of the death of my lamented sister. My plans were quite undetermined when I received Madame Verani's letter, and I therefore gladly accepted her invitation, and proceeded without loss of time to St. Siffren, where I was received in the kindest manner. But Madame Verani lived in the world, that is, in the little world of the small town in which she resided. I could not partake of her amusements; my heart was still too sad, and therefore she had not power to divert me from my original idea of withdrawing to a convent.

There is not a more beautiful situation in the dominions of the King of Sardinia, exquisitely fine as are many parts of the territories of this king of hills, than that of St. Siffren. It is a small fortified town, on the side of a gentle slope, commanding on the west and south the prospect of a charming valley, watered by a stream which draws its source from the neighbouring mountains, and which, after running a few leagues, loses its very name by mingling its waters with those of the Rhone, above its fall into the lake of Geneva.

The country around St. Siffren is so far north as to have lost the Italian style of scenery which prevails near the shores of the Mediterranean; but if, in consequence, the acacia, the citron, the aloe, the olive, and the caroube have disappeared from its groves and gardens; and if the cypress is more rare, and the palm-tree never seen; yet I know not whether the deficiency of these is not more than made up by the richness of its meadows and the charming verdure of its fragrant downs; in consequence of which the country abounds with flocks, which, in the warmer months of the year, are drawn up into the mountains, where the shepherds have erected their chalets, in regions unapproachable during the frosts of winter.

But while the little town commands a view of an open country towards the north and west, the mountains rise directly from its walls on the other quarters, —some of them being abrupt and precipitous, and nearly inaccessible to any foot but that of the chamois; and others again presenting rounded forms and gentle slopes covered with a soft thymy herbage; in several instances being crowned with groves of dark pine, as elegantly and fancifully arranged by nature as if they had been expressly planted there by the imitative art of

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the ornamental gardener. Among these arose many streams of the purest water, which, in proportion as the summer heat increased, poured more and more abundantly from the heights, as it were, boasting the inexhaustible nature of the source from whence they sprang. Nevertheless, these waters are arrested in their course during the winter, and hang from the rocks in long transparent pendants, sparkling in the sunbeam like drops of diamonds. Immediately beyond the southern gate of St. Siffren, the road towards the mountains makes a steep and rapid ascent till it comes into a line with the pepper-box turret on each side of the gateway of the town, and there it joins a terrace of stone, which runs parallel with the wall of the town, though on a level, as I before remarked, with the tower upon that wall.

Along this terrace, when I first knew St. Siffren, was a row of chestnut-trees, behind which was a line of gloomy buildings, showing few windows towards the front, and those being narrow, far from the ground, and double grated. This edifice was a convent of Notre Dame de Misericorde, of the order of St. Augustin;—a convent of very old establishment, and high renown for sanctity, of which the superior was an abbess, and, at the time I speak of, an individual of the noble family of Lascaris, supposed to be descended from the emperors of the East. Behind this convent was a very large garden, which was the more beautiful as it encroached upon the hill which rose immediately behind the house, and in consequence was divested of that stiffness which must always be found in a pleasure-ground situated on a perfect level. This garden was surrounded by exceedingly high walls, and moreover was shaded by a line of very tall cedar-trees planted within the wall; yet was it commanded from the hill behind, though at so great a distance as by no means to incommode those who took the air, even in the most exposed part of the garden. This spot of ground had also another advantage, which was this,—that a little stream of clear water from the hills passed through it, a low grated arch being provided in the wall for its entrance, and another, on the other side, for its exit.

I was exceedingly captivated with the appearance of this establishment, and having made up my mind to obtain admission therein, if possible, I got my friend

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Madame Verani to speak to Father Joachim, the confessor of the household, who presently intimated that Madame la Superieure would see me at an hour appointed, on a certain day in the following week; in consequence of which, my friend and myself repaired to the house at the time fixed. Having arrived on the terrace under the walls of the convent, we walked slowly forward, and there was a decided impression of awe on the minds of both of us.

So many of the ancient religious edifices were destroyed during the revolutions which subsequently affected many of the continental countries, that we now seldom see a monastic society invested with all those circumstances of solemn majesty in which they were clothed in the days of darkness now passing away. The convent of which I am speaking had as yet been undisturbed. It still retained all its appurtenances of old magnificence, its fanes and towers of Gothic masonry, its various emblematic sculptures, its emblazoned windows, lofty halls, and long arcades, its marble shrines, and relics, and golden candelabra, and crosses of bronze and alabaster, together with many of those emblems of idolatry with which the apostate church loves to adorn her sanctuaries.

I was at that time a devoted papist, and therefore was prepared to admire and venerate all that I should see in this seat of divine purity, such as I supposed all places of this kind to be;—not considering that, as every person who enters a house of this kind brings with her a depraved nature, a body of sin from which she can be only delivered by death, those bars and locks which shut out the busy world have no power to exclude the passions which destroy the peace, and which will probably grow the deeper into the heart of the individual, from not having the means of expending themselves provided by that kind Providence which, at the period of the fall, ordained that man should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

But, as I said, my friend and I passed on till we arrived before the chief entrance of the house. It was not a gateway, but a double door, embossed with iron, and set deep in the thick wall, the frame of the door being of granite, fluted and rising to a point, over which, in a niche in the wall, was a stone figure of a religieuse, in the dress of the order, kneeling with hands upraised

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towards some object in the corner of the niche which I could not make out, though I supposed it might be intended for a dove. From the lips of the female figure proceeded a scroll, on which was written—*Misericordias Dei in Eternum Cantabo.* We had pulled a bell, and while we were examining the sculpture, we heard approaching steps, and then the pulling of a bolt, and the turning of a key in the lock. A very old woman opened the door, whose dress nearly resembled that of the figure we had been considering. It seems that she was one of those inferior sisters of the convent who are admitted without any payment, and who perform the parts of menials: these persons take the three vows of poverty, chastity, and piety, as well as the sisters of higher degree.

It seems that the portress was aware that we were expected, for she admitted us without a word; and while she was barring the door again, we were looking around us from the place in which we stood. We were standing in a vaulted passage, having doors on each side; that nearest us, on the left, communicated with the church, and was used, as I afterward found, by the priests; but beyond these doors were a double grating and folding shutter, which last might be so placed as to prevent any one, situated as we were, from seeing any thing beyond the grating. These shutters were, however, partially open, and I could see that the passage extended beyond them to a square open court, surrounded by low buildings, and having a cloistered walk round it; a marble cross on a pediment in the centre was dimly visible beyond the arched opening of the passage. But I must not forget to say that, besides the doors which opened into that part of the passage in which we stood, there were certain little barred apertures, filled up with double gratings, the outer of which were iron, the inner cane, as were most of the gratings in the house. Within these apertures hung black curtains; but the portress, having barred the outer gate, stepped before us, and passing by the door which led into the church, stopped at the next, which having opened, she introduced us into a small paved hall, without mat or carpet, and having no other furniture than a few chairs, and a large oil painting of a religieuse, in which we recognised the stone figure over the portal. Under this figure, in black letters, we read these words—

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Santa Mater Teresa, a Jesu Fondatrix
Ordinis Sancta Maria a Monte Carmeli.

In the inner wall of this hall was a long grating, provided with a curtain within; and on one side of this grating a circular iron box, by which any thing might be passed into the inner chamber.

My friend and I sat down, as directed, before this grating, and had not waited a minute before the curtain was withdrawn, and the superieure appeared behind it. I trembled at the instant my eye fell upon her, such was my idea at that time of the exalted character of the head of such an establishment as that into which I was about to enter; indeed, my agitation was such, that I was unable to speak for a few minutes, though I bowed profoundly, and could hardly be persuaded to sit down. The abbess was a little woman, though possessing much dignity of manner. She was probably more than forty years of age, nor did she look young for that age; her complexion was extremely pale, and the upper part of her face had been beautiful, her eyes being of bright hazel, and her eyebrows delicately pencilled, which, in a face not relieved by hair, had a particularly pleasing effect. Her manners were those of the most perfect politeness, and that of a superior kind; indeed, even had I not previously known that she was descended from Irene, daughter of the Lascaris, I certainly should have attributed nobility of birth to one possessed of so very superior an air; but I did not expect what she exhibited the instant she became sensible of the state of my feelings, namely, a most encouraging and even caressing manner, and of a sort which, had I previously been balancing respecting my vocation, would, I felt, have instantly decided me.

"My daughter," she said, "you are an orphan, I understand, and are willing to seek a mother in me. Believe me, my arms and my heart are open to you; many doves have fled from the cruel and dangerous world to find shelter within these sacred walls, where they enjoy a peace which the world cannot give; and here, within the ark, they are borne above the cares and troubles of this tempestuous life, into that haven of peace where all things are new. The church," added she, addressing my friend, "is as the ark of Noah; without it is a perishing world; within it are safety—perfect safety—and

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peace, and holy joy. You think, madame," she continued, "you think, perhaps, that we are unhappy here; how little you, how little the world know us. You fancy that our life is monotonous, that it is dull, fatiguing, heavy; that we know not what to do with our hours; that we are haunted with ennui," and she spoke rapidly and with extreme vivacity, laughing heartily at intervals, and then catching herself up, and saying, "Do you not watch and break your rest in the service of the world? do you not labour, and toil, and fret, and repine, and suffer privations and mortifications? and what is your reward, but anguish and remorse? We watch and labour also, and what do we gain by these our holy services? Do we not render ourselves acceptable to our God by them? Are we not blessed in the favour of our holy Mother? In truth, you are as indefatigable as we are, but your master is the evil one, and from him you must look for your reward; whereas we are looking for a crown which fadeth not away, and while awaiting this crown, we, by prayer and fasting, and suffering poverty, in order that thereby we may enrich others, are satisfying God for our sins, and laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven; for as the angel Raphael said to Tobias, 'Prayer, accompanied by fasting and almsgiving, is worth more than all the treasures and all the gold which could be amassed.'"

Madame Verani, on hearing all this, seemed hardly able to look up at the lady, such was her sense of her superiority, a feeling which was, no doubt, understood by the other, for she was thereby encouraged to expatiate, for some time, on the holy joy which is obtained by a life wholly devoted to the works of prayer, and praise, and divine meditation. After which, addressing me with much kindness of manner, she made me give an account of the motives and feelings which had led me to seek this interview. I was candid with her; I opened all my feelings to her; nay, I believe that I should have found it difficult to conceal any thing from her, so skilful was she in entwining herself round the young heart; and as she decidedly declined taking me in as a pensionnaire unless my present determination was to take the veil; and as I did not feel myself able to resist her, it was settled that I should return in a few days, remain a short time as a pensionnaire, and if in that period nothing should happen to change my mind,

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I should take the white veil;—she having made me understand that the ceremonial of taking the white veil would not bind me to remain in the establishment, at the same time that it would allow me to associate freely with the sisters, and to judge correctly of the mode of life, which, as a mere boarder, I could not do; the regulations of the house not permitting a pensionnaire to converse freely, or to take her meals, with the professed. Then addressing my friend again, "Madame Verani," she said, "my reason for these cautions shall be explained to you with all candour. Our establishment is, as you know, one of the highest respectability, and it depends on me to regard its renown for sanctity in every way which I can command. I blame myself exceedingly for having been induced, from motives of weak humanity, to take in a lady some months since as a pretendante, who, after having exhibited much changeableness of temper, left me in a very unhandsome manner, although she had had a severe illness in the house, and had been attended by one of my most beloved daughters." A slight flush passed over the countenance of the superieure as she was relating this anecdote, as if it had renewed some exceedingly painful feelings within her breast; but immediately becoming cool, she began to laugh,—I may say, to force a laugh, as I have since remembered, and addressing me again, "Well, my child," she said, "do you consent to my plan? Does the idea of your espousals alarm you? Would you wish to take more time to think of it?" And she added somewhat more in the same strain, which I will not now repeat, for the style of language used in convents respecting the Lord the Saviour appears to me so grossly blasphemous, that I tremble at the thought that I ever could have used it. The female who takes the white veil is called the espoused; and our blessed Lord is commonly designated, and that in the most unceremonious manner, by the name of the husband;—the inferior nuns, and persons of the household of the coarsest mind often saying, "This must not be done, or that must not be done, for my husband will not approve it."

It is true that the union of Christ with his church is shown forth in Scripture under the emblem of marriage; but surely the familiar use of this figure, and its application to individuals, cannot be approved by a correct and pious mind; but at the period of which

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I speak, I did not see the impropriety of this mode of speech. There was something very elevating, on the contrary, to my mind, in the idea of my being called "la sposa." And here, if it were not out of place, I could remark, how directly the monastic system leads to that spirit in the individual, which is expressed in these words, *Stand by, I am holier than thou.*

Our conference with the abbess was long, and it was arranged during that conference that I should be received the next day as a pensionnaire, with the view of taking the white veil as soon as possible,—Madame la Superieure having taken much pains to convince me that it would be quite as easy for me to return to the world after having laid aside my secular habits as before, and not dropping the smallest hint by which I might be led to understand the truth, namely, that such a step would infallibly destroy my credit, not only with good Catholics, but with the world itself. For much as the world may be supposed to think lightly of a religious profession, it has no charity for one who, having once set his hand to the plough, turns back again from that which he has undertaken. I hope I do not wrong the superieure, and with her all the rulers of monastic orders, by saying, that they are very skilful in fitting their temptations to the supposed state of mind of the person whom they intend to allure,—stooping to arts which would hardly be believed by persons not acquainted with their ideas of expediency. Of this, however, I shall presently give an example; for, before we took leave, my friend having expressed a wish to see some of my future companions, if it were not contrary to the rules of the house, the superieure arose with alacrity, and passing out through an inner door, spoke to a person without, and returned immediately to her seat near the grate. It was, however, nearly ten minutes before the summons was obeyed. At the end of which time three sisters entered the apartment.

My Protestant reader, although it may be that you have never seen a religieuse, yet I cannot suppose but that you have formed some idea of one; and if your imagination has any life in it, you have already depicted to yourself the sort of figures which were to appear at the summons of the superieure; and I think I may be well assured that your ideas will not be consonant with the reality. The three young ladies who entered be-

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hind the grating were as elegant young women, as to their carriage, as I had ever seen; and this will be understood, when I explain that the principal part of the business of the life of a religieuse is to form a part in the pantomime of the apostate church, and to fill up a portion of a picture meant to be imposingly beautiful. A graceful manner, therefore, is often very remarkable among the sisters; but the three who had been selected to be introduced on the present occasion were, as I afterward found, particularly suited for an exhibition of this kind, and for the part they were to act in it. I knew them afterward by the names of Honorine, Catharine, and Marguerite. They were the most beautiful girls in the convent, with the exception of two only, of whom I shall speak more hereafter. They were entirely devoted, I can hardly venture to say to their religion, but to their party; hence they possessed as eager desires to augment their numbers, as a sergeant (to use a homely simile) would naturally feel who is to get his reward for every recruit. They knew perfectly well wherefore they were called, and that it was their clew to seem excessively gay. Hence they entered all smiling, and as it were full of rapture, being flushed, at the same time, at the sight of strangers; and ranging themselves by their spiritual mother, they began a somewhat elaborate yet successful display of their extreme happiness, the superieure, at the same time, enjoying the surprise of my friend.

"Behold my daughters," she said; "do they seem very sad? which of the pale votaries of worldly pleasures resemble my blooming children?"—and while she continued to hold forth in this strain, my future companions were addressing me and each other by turns. The sister Marguerite, who was the oldest of the party, and therefore the most at home in the character she was to act, having looked at me a moment, whispered to the others, "Ah! comme elle est jolie!" and then proceeded to remark, how a habit such as they wore would become me; to which the others assented, looking eagerly through the grating. I knew that I had never been thought beautiful, and yet I was pleased; and having my hand on the grate, Marguerite put hers through, and seizing it, said, "Now we have you, and we will keep you;" on which they all laughed heartily, being joined by the superieur

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Our conference broke off soon after this, and I returned to my friend's house, impatient for the day in which I was to renew my acquaintance with the three charming girls whom I had seen behind the grate.

I now proceed to the period of my becoming an inmate of the house. It was on the morning of the third day after my visit that I found myself again within the outer door mentioned above. The portress having barred the gate behind me, selected another key from her huge bunch, and having opened the grated gate described on occasion of my first visit, and permitted me to pass through it, she stopped again to lock it.

We had, it seemed, passed the eastern side of the church, and come into a line with that apartment called in a convent le chœur; viz. that part of the church occupied during service by the sisters, and communicating with the body of the church by gratings. This apartment, the door of which was open, resembled a beautiful hall in the style of the florid Gothic, having several richly painted windows, in the centre compartment of each of which was a human figure crowned with a resplendent glory. The flooring was a tesselated pavement, and round the apartment were stalls, or seats of oak, so old as to be nearly black; these also were richly wrought. There were besides several fine paintings on the wall. In one corner of the apartment, which in fact was a part of the church, was a confessional, communicating with a recess behind the high altar, where the priest could hear the confession without being admitted into the chœur. Having stopped one instant to look around, I passed on, and then saw the square court in the centre of which was the cross of which I spoke before, and perceived that this court was not paved, but covered with grass.

"That, my sister," said the portress, "is our burying-ground; as we pass from the refectory to the chapel, we have the edifying view of this place always before our eyes. We all select the precise spot where we would lie; and some of us are already provided with our coffins; it is a laudable and religious work to become thus familiarized with death, and one greatly acceptable in the sight of our Lord." I would wish my reader to understand that in many instances in which I shall use the word *Lord*, that of husband was what the speaker

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really served herself withal: but this is blasphemy, which I tremble to repeat even from the mouth of another.

I was not altogether inclined to sympathize with the old woman in these speculations on death, though I did not presume to question the propriety of encouraging thoughts of this kind. Indeed, I supposed it to be an important duty, and if not agreeable to me, I imagined that it was owing to some great defect in my own mind.

But passing away from the view of the cemetery, the portress led me through a sort of ante-room, into which more than one curtained grating opened, into a parlour appertaining to the superieure, and where, as she informed me, I must await the arrival of madame. So saying, she left me to amuse myself by examining the apartment, in which there was nothing very remarkable as to furniture, though the chamber had a peculiarly sombre appearance, from the dark colour of the wainscot, and the depth of the walls, by which the light of the windows was considerably obscured. There were several crosses and many paintings in the room, with more than one effigy of the Virgin. But the abbess did not leave me long alone; she presently entered, and advancing to embrace me, exclaimed, in high enthusiastic mood, which I did not then suspect to be affected, "Suffer me, sweet child, to welcome you to this abode of peace, these blessed walls, from whence all the evil passions of a cruel and corrupt world are excluded. I trust, my child, that you come with the firm purpose of devoting yourself to God, by a life of poverty, celibacy, and piety; for blessed are those, my daughter, who cast themselves in the flower and bloom of their age into the arms of a celestial Bridegroom,—thus to wear out their days in performing those services of prayer, of penance, and of self-mortification, which are no other than the tokens of the love of the espoused, as exhibited in the personal absence of her divine Husband."

These blasphemies, for I can call them no other, with many others to the same effect, she ran off with a sort of heartless and simpering glibness, which, when I reflected upon them in after-life, conveyed the idea to my mind that she had many such by rote, always ready for use as occasion called for them.

In reply, however, to these observations, I informed her that my mind was fully made up to the life of a re-

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ligieuse, requesting to know how soon I might be permitted to take the white veil.

She mentioned fifteen days as the very shortest time; and then informed me that she trusted her dear daughter, for such she continued to call me, would employ that interval in those exercises of devotion and meditation which would render her more acceptable to that glorious Consort to whom she was about to be affianced in exclusion of all earthly rivals. She enlarged much on this point, using that style of language which I have hinted at before; and then proceeded to show me how I ought to prepare myself for these glorious espousals,—showing me how every moment of my time ought to be filled up in some meritorious form; and then flying off in a sort of general panegyric of the happy lives of those who had already devoted themselves to the heavenly Bridegroom.

"How little can the world comprehend our bliss, my daughter!" she said; "how little can it understand the transports which are enjoyed by the espoused of God in the service of their Beloved! What time have we for ennui? Who can say how sweetly or rapidly our hours pass on from time to eternity? or tell how blessed to us must be the passage from youth to age, and from life to death,—occupied as we are most of the day in the service of him to whom we are espoused, and rapt, as it were, in soul to his presence? The pains and fatigues of body which we experience (for the flesh is weak) only remind us of our spiritual bliss, and add more and more to those graces which render us lovely in his eyes."

Whether there was sense or nonsense, truth or falsehood in all this, I know not; but this I know, that it so wrought upon me that I was quite impatient to begin my course of duties; at the same time that I was rather mortified to be told that I could only be permitted to see the sisters in general during certain hours of prayer in the chapel. "I would, sweet girl," added the superieure, caressingly, "gladly skip over this rule for your sake; but a wife must be obedient, you know;—the Master of this house must be obeyed. However," she added, "you shall not be quite solitary; I shall introduce you to la mère assistante, and to one of my dear children, who, though young, is already so entirely devoted, that I do not hesitate to say that she may be of as much use to

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you as I myself could be, even could I devote all my time to you. But before we break up our conference, permit me to ask you," she said, "what name you received at your baptism?"

"Cecile, madame," I replied.

"Cecile!" she repeated; "a blessed name! Nevertheless we must aspire to a better. The first, and one of the dearest, of my daughters took the name of Angelique when she was professed; but she has long been associated with her kindred angels!—will our Cecile adopt her name, and take her place?—But I will not press you," she added; "you shall have time to consider all these things. What you do shall be done with a free, and I trust with an entire good-will." So saying, she kissed me again, and, still holding my hand, she led me out of her parlour into a long gallery, which ran on the back of the chœur. Here, as waiting the pleasure of the abbess, stood a young nun, whom I had not seen before; she had her back towards us when we first saw her, but, turning round immediately, she displayed a figure and countenance which I could not easily forget. Whether she were perfectly beautiful or not I never could determine; but Sister Annunciata had a form and face which fixed the attention of every one who looked at her. When she was present, it was impossible to be occupied by any other person in the room. Every movement of this young lady seemed important, and every change of posture exhibited the attitudes of a noble work of the chisel. She was of Italian birth, and her face was of the finest Italian character. The general expression of her countenance was composed, but it was a composure which seemed to indicate a total want of interest in the ordinary occurrences of life. When any sudden excitement kindled her eye, it assumed a brilliancy which quite startled the beholder; but even in such moments as these it was difficult to discover in what manner the circumstance which had awakened her interest had affected her feelings. I cannot say, that, in all the time I lived in the house with this young lady, I ever saw a natural or playful smile animate her features; even that which most awakened the mirth of those about her would only excite a sort of glow in her marble cheek, and cause her to protrude her beautiful under-lip with something resembling scorn. But though she never smiled, when she desired to please she could assume a

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softness and earnestness of manner which was very impressive, and which I have seldom seen any one able to resist. The superieure directed this young lady, or rather requested it as a favour of her, to show me my apartment, whispering, at the same time, a word to her which I did not hear; for there can be nothing done in a convent without a whisper or signal, *à la derobé*. But this whisper being concluded, I was led by the young lady to the end of the gallery, and up a magnificent flight of stairs into a passage above, into which many doors opened: these were the doors of the cells or apartments of the sisters.

She stepped towards one of these doors, and having opened it, introduced me into a small square chamber, the furniture of which, though scanty, was neatly arranged. Here I found my small trunk already arrived. The bed was in one corner of the room, and in a line with the head of it a little grated window, towards which I hastened, and saw to my great pleasure that it commanded the whole of the garden, and beyond it a green hill, rich with verdure, and crowned with a grove of pines. There were sheep feeding on this hill, and under the shade of one of the pines I could discern the shepherd, extended on the grass. I was just on the point of remarking the beauty of this scene to my companion, when, recollecting myself, I suppressed the observation, though I hardly knew wherefore. "You will, I trust, find every thing here which you may require, sister," said the nun, as I turned from the window.

"Every thing looks vastly comfortable," I answered in my haste, though I had as yet examined none of the articles in the chamber.

"Your malle is already arrived, I see," returned the sister, fixing her eyes on the trunk; "will you allow me to inquire if you have any books with you? You are aware, no doubt, that no books but those approved by madame are allowed in the house."

I opened my little trunk, and showed her that it contained nothing but absolute necessaries. She remarked, after looking on the simple contents, "Even these few possessions you will gladly give up, sister, when you take the veil; we all make the vow of poverty, and our clothes are in common."

I did not thoroughly relish this idea, and told her so.

"That," she replied, "which is least pleasing to the

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flesh is most agreeable to our Lord; if we refuse to make ourselves poor for his sake, how can we expect that he will impart of his riches for our sakes."

I confessed that I had spoken unadvisedly, for the grave rebuke of this beautiful young woman had made me feel a sense of inferiority which was painful to me, and I added, "But you must pardon me, sister, and bear with me. I trust that by prayer and penitence I shall soon be set entirely free from the bonds of the flesh."

"Great," replied Annunciata, "is the efficacy of prayer, for it is the means by which alone, as reasonable creatures, we can obtain the grace of God."

I looked inquiringly at her, as one desiring instruction, and she thus proceeded: "Without the grace of God we cannot save ourselves; also, without prayer we cannot acquire this grace, according to the words of our Saviour, 'Ask and you shall receive.'"*

Had I then known what I now do of the revealed word of God, I should have answered, "Man cannot pray until grace has been given to him from above, for the prayer of faith proceeds from grace already received;" but such an answer was far beyond me at that time, and I merely replied by asking her opinion respecting the forms and times of prayer which I ought to adopt in my situation as a pretendante; at the same time acknowledging that I was subject to much distraction of mind when using lengthened forms, and anxiously inquiring whether these wanderings of the mind destroyed the merit of prayer.

"Yes," she replied, "if they are voluntary; but if they are not so, our prayers will not fail to be useful to us, and agreeable to God."

She further added, on my putting the question to her, "That if I prayed in Latin or any other foreign tongue which I did not understand, God would not fail to hearken to my requests thus made; and wherefore?—because although I did not understand what I said, God would understand my words."†

This last assertion of the beautiful sister certainly could not be disputed, viz. that although any one should pray in a tongue unknown to himself, that tongue would not be unknown to the omniscient Ruler of all things.

* Catechisme Theologique de la Compagnie de Jesus.
† *Ibid.*

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I was, therefore, fully satisfied by this truly Jesuitical argument, and felt every instant more and more astonished at the superior wisdom of my youthful instructress.

She then proposed to me to take a walk in the garden. "Madame," she said, "is engaged with the sisters, the present being the hour in which they are giving an account of what they have read; but she has directed me to devote myself to you, and we shall not now be interrupted."

I accepted her offer, but was sorry that I was not to see my future companions; however, I felt that this was not a sentiment fit to utter in the presence of Sister Annunciata,—I therefore accompanied her into the garden, which was indeed as lovely a spot as I had imagined it to be, having every variety of beautiful tree and fragrant flower which the climate would allow, the face of the ground being as diversified as the comparatively small space within the walls would permit. The object of all that passed between me and the sister during the walk, was to confirm me in my vocation and to initiate me in its duties; and I could not help asking myself, what it was in this young lady which seemed, from one moment to another, to acquire a stronger ascendency over my mind. I set down this strange influence, at that time, to the very extraordinary sanctity which I attributed to her. I have since thought that there are some minds made for rule, and some for submission; and that there are certain intellects under which all others bend.

Our walk continued till the hour of vespers, to which we were called by a bell. Annunciata led the way, and bringing me into the court of the cemetery, we saw the sisters passing, in long and solemn order, along the cloister at the opposite end of this court, from the refectory into the chœur. All arrangements in a convent are made for effect, insomuch that every ceremony forms a picture, and thus the eye of the uninstructed is fascinated, and the old Serpent, who has been the primum mobile of this great system, has retained his peculiar characteristic, viz. that of fascinating by the eye. The superieure and sisters were all arranged in their places when I entered the chœur, and took a seat provided for me, so far behind the religieuses that I saw only their graceful figures; and as I retained this seat

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all the time I remained as a pretendante, I could scarcely be said to increase my knowledge even of their faces during all that period, though my three young friends, whom I had seen behind the grate, contrived, as they passed out before me, to give me, each day, a smile of recognition.

The service had commenced when I took my place, but as I shall have occasion hereafter to say much of these services, and the effect which the sweet voices of the sisters had upon my feelings, I shall say the less of them at present; neither shall I greatly enlarge upon the manner in which I spent the fifteen days of my probation, any more than to observe, that, as I have since been assured, there was no small pains taken to prevent any communication with the sisters in general, though I constantly associated with Annunciata and la mère assistante.

I was not required to attend any other services in the chapel than those of the morning and evening, but I had several communications with Father Joachim in the confessional, who admonished me to observe certain solitary forms in my own apartment, and required me to commit to memory the seven penitentiary psalms. Thus were things so arranged that I in fact knew almost as little of my companions, and of the mode of life I was actually to lead, at the end of the fifteen days, as I did the first evening of my admission into the house. In the mean time it would be difficult to describe the kindness which was shown to me by Madame la Superieure, and la Mère Ursule, who was the assistant. I had a severe cold one day, and I was put to bed and tucked up by la mère assistante, while the abbess herself poured out my ptisan. I hope that there was not the deep art in all this which I afterward suspected: but I used to reason thus even then with myself—they can have no design in all this kindness; for am I not as much at liberty to leave them at the end of the year of my novitiate, as I am now? Nevertheless this same reasoning I speak of argues some sort of apprehension or doubt existing even then in my mind: but it must always be remembered that, at the time of which I am speaking, I was totally ignorant of real religion; and believed that by the step I was about to take, I was ensuring to myself a degree of happiness and glory in the life to come, which was not to be obtained by re-

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maining in the world. I shall now proceed to the awful morning in which I was to become a novice: for it must be observed, that a person desiring to be a religieuse is not a novice till she leaves her secular habits: then she may be said to be in her novitiate, but before she is only in a state of pretension to become a novice.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROFESSION.

It was Sunday, and the bishop who was to perform the ceremony (or the celebrant, as we called him) had arrived at Saint Siffren the evening before—not expressly on my account, but for an ordination and other duties of his office—and he was to be present in the chapel, with all his functionaries, at eight in the morning. I had slept little during the night, and had risen before daylight to prayer. I think it may not be uninteresting to give an account of this ceremony.

My habits, in which I was first to appear, had been duly prepared for me; they consisted of a muslin dress, with blue ornaments, a large bouquet of flowers, and a cap, or toque, of blue gauze, trimmed with silver: in all these I was carefully dressed, several of the sisters being now busy about me, although I was too much agitated to distinguish one from another. In the mean time all had been prepared in the chœur. From this part of the church there are two double grates; one of which opens on the body of the church, and the other upon the high altar; these are large and wide, so that those without may see the sisters within; and there is care generally taken to bring those most forward whose appearance will do credit to the establishment—this matter, however, is arranged with address, though it is well understood. There had been a carpet laid in the chœur, within the upper grating, which opens on the altar, and hassocks, for myself and the superieure to kneel upon, and just within the altar was a chair for the bishop. But it is not my intention to go through the description of all the forms which are used on this

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occasion—nor to say what anthems were chanted—how often the bishop's robes were changed—how the priests passed and repassed before the altar, bowing each time—or how full the church was with people, all crowding in to behold the gorgeous bridal (for this is the point of view in which the ceremony is held)—nor to tell how, sometimes solemnly, and sometimes mournfully, the organ swelled upon the ear, or died away in low and scarcely audible notes: I shall content myself with describing my own part in the ceremony. The bell having admonished us within the house that all was ready for the solemn ceremonial, the whole family immediately assembled in a room joining the chœur, usually called the ante-chœur, in order that the sisters should put on a long black draping, called le manteau de l'Eglise, and that each should take in her hand a burning taper of wax; and when the superieure had given the signal we all proceeded, by two and two, the younger sisters going first into the chœur, and the abbess entering last, leading the victim about to be offered at the shrine of superstition; the whole procession being visible to the congregation through the two gratings. We all were required to bow as we passed the upper grate, which opened on the high altar; and while each sister took her place, the abbess led me to a seat prepared, just within the grate above mentioned, where she placed herself by me, in full view of the whole church. Then began the hymn, *O! Gloriosa Domina excelsa super sidera*, &c., with certain short prayers, chanted by the celebrant, who sat within the rails of the altar in all the pomp of violet and gold, with his splendid crosier by his side, and his gemmed and sparkling mitre on his venerable brow. A sermon then followed, from a pulpit nearly opposite to us, in which what I was about to do was commended in a language and style that may be easily understood, and which tended not a little to keep up the spirit of false enthusiasm that had supported me, though not without some misgivings, during the last fifteen days. This sermon being concluded, many prayers in Latin and sundry recitatives ensued. After which the clothes which I was to put on being presented to the bishop, he sprinkled them with holy water, and blessed them, delivering them to the superieure. I then knelt down while the celebrant questioned me respecting my feelings and

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motives as to taking the veil—the questions and answers being all such as the church had dictated, and being in fact no other than a printed form. It was either then, or during some time of the service,—my memory fails me in this particular,—that a lady who sat near the altar took my hand in character of my godmother, and placed it within that of the celebrant. Madame Verani had been asked to be my godmother; but as she had always opposed my resolution to take the veil, she could not be prevailed upon to perform that office for me, although she thought it right to be present at the ceremony. Soon after having replied to the usual questions, I was led out of the church by the superieure to change my dress.

Thus terminated the first act of this solemn pantomime. It is to be supposed that at this time my hair was cut off, but as this operation required some time, it was put off till the next day, and my hair was only hid carefully under the cappe, or black band across the brow; still, however, there was some bustle to get off my smart frock and ornaments, and to invest me with my new habit, before the various prayers and chantings, which are arranged for filling up this interval, were exhausted. We were, however, very expeditious, the hands of my assistants being well-practised in this part of the drama, for I can call it no other; and I was then brought back to my place before the altar, having my black robe without a girdle, and only a small veil, my burning taper being again put into my hand. Then followed other ceremonies, in which the celebrant, having blessed the scapulaire, the veil, the girdle, the cross, and other appendages of the sacred dress, which had not yet been put on, gave them to the abbess, who arranged them on me with no small parade, finishing off my bridal attire by a crown of mingled thorns and roses, which was placed over my veil.

I have taken a task upon me which I cannot complete, as these forms, unauthorized as they are by Scripture, now appear to me so blasphemous and so puerile, that I cannot enlarge upon them any farther: I shall simply say, that the ceremony terminated, after we had all received the wafer from the hands of the celebrant, by my kissing the hand of the superieure, and then passing round the chœur, and kissing all the sisters, more than one of whom seemed considerably affected at this part

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of the scene. While I was thus passing round the chœur, the sisters were singing, *Ecce quam bonam et quam jucundam;* and, while still singing, we all withdrew from the chœur, the voices of the sisters being heard some time after we had quitted the church.

And now I was indeed a cloistered nun, and, although I had not taken the fatal black veil, I was, to all intents and purposes, as entirely bound as if I had; for how could I ever appear again among my former acquaintance, with such a blight on my reputation as that which I should necessarily incur by abandoning such a public profession as I had just made. I was aware of this immediately after the ceremony was concluded, and only wondered how it had happened that I had not seen the step which I had meditated in the same light before it had taken place.

It was therefore in a melancholy mood that I followed the abbess into the parlour behind the grille, where I had first seen her; and when I there found that I was never more to behold my dear friend Madame Verani, but through a grille, I felt a sadness stealing over me which I could not entirely conceal.

An elegant breakfast (of which, by-the-by, I was to pay the cost) had been set out in the hall, into which I and my friend had been ushered when I first visited the house, with an additional table within the grating, similarly furnished with cakes, sweetmeats, chocolate, and fruits. The guests without were Monseigneur l'Eveque, Monsieur and Madame Verani, with some other persons whom I had caused to be invited as her friends, Father Joachim, and several others of the clerical order, who either belonged to the establishment of Notre Dame de Misericorde, or were followers of the bishop. Those within the grille consisted of myself as queen of the day, the superieure, and other elders of the house, but none of the sisters. The conversation during the breakfast was lively, and even facetious; monseigneur conducting himself with the most gentlemanlike urbanity, and the bars which separated the two parties not seeming to be any hindrance to the freedom of conversation. Monsieur and Madame Verani and myself being the only persons present who were able to appear otherwise than gay. I say appear, for it is impossible that the gayety of several of those then present could have been from the heart.

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Before the party dispersed, Madame Verani asked permission to see me soon again, but was told that it was only once a month that the young ladies were permitted to see their friends.

I have forgotten to say that during the whole of the festivity I was addressed by the title of La Sposa,—a glorious title, indeed, when taken in the sense there intended, and one which, were it bestowed by Him who alone has a right to give it, is as far above all earthly titles as the east is from the west; but which, when bestowed by mortals in virtue of some vain ceremony, becomes nothing but an impious and horrible blasphemy.

At length our spiritual father left us, Monsieur and Madame Verani took their leave, and the black curtain being drawn over the grating, I prepared to follow the lady superieure into that part of the house into which I had not as yet been introduced.

And now, my reader must henceforward know me by the appellation of the sister Angelique, which is the name I chose, according to the intimated wishes of the superieure, when I quitted that which had been given me by my parents; but before we left the parlour, the company being gone, the superieure directed me to give my crown to la mère assistante, to put aside in a safe place; "and remember," she added, "let the name be ticketed upon it:—you know for what purpose, daughter?"

"No, indeed, madame," I replied.

She smiled, and la Mère Ursule laughed outright, laying her skinny hand on my shoulder, and saying, "The crown is put by for you to wear in your coffin, daughter,—it is the custom of the house. The daughters of the earth descend into the grave in their shrouds and burying attire; but we wear the crowns which our husband gave us in the day of our espousals."

I made no reply to this, for I did not dare to trust my voice, feeling a degree of sadness creeping over me, which was only the more potent from the state of forced enthusiasm in which I had been for some hours past. The elders, no doubt, understood these symptoms, and therefore the superieure hastened to break up this more private conference, which she did with certain expressions of fondness, which, even at this early hour of my profession, began to fill my mind with nameless apprehension; for I already began to conceive that the pill

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must be bitter indeed which required so much to gild it. There was a sort of lurking triumph in the eye of la Mère Ursule, I thought, as she observed the caresses lavished upon me by her superior; and though I had often been thus caressed and flattered, yet I had never before felt myself so little inclined to receive these advances in good part. However, this scene was soon terminated, by the abbess taking me by the hand, and leading me to my future companions.

It was the custom of the house to render the day of the profession of a new sister a period of as high glee as our secluded situation would permit. There was policy in this, because it became the interest of every one who wished for a holyday to do all that in her lay to persuade any pretendante who might come in her way, or any sister of the white veil, to give her such a holyday. The sisters, on this occasion, always had a treat in the refectory, after which more hours of recreation were permitted them than at any other period;—indeed, they were left entirely to themselves till vespers, and they not unseldom spent the afternoon under the cedar-trees, on a bank closely shorn, in the garden, which, in fine weather (and it was a remarkably fine day in the month of June when I professed), was a most delightful situation.

The entertainment was already concluded in the refectory, and the sisters were in the garden, and seated in various groups on this bank, when the superieure, accompanied by la Mère Ursule and Sister Annunciata, who joined us in the cloister, brought me in her hand to introduce me to those whom I looked upon as the companions of my future life. They all rose, and came forward as we appeared, and received me each with a kiss, and some of the elder ones with a blessing, solemnly pronounced in the name of Notre Dame de Misericorde; after which the superieure, having herself condescended to give me her hand to kiss, returned to the house with la Mère Ursule, the Sister Annunciata remaining awhile behind her.

I expected that my first three acquaintances in the convent, the sisters Honorine, Josephine, and Marguerite, would come forward on this occasion, on which I suddenly found myself among persons whose faces I had never seen before, but I was mistaken: they had kissed me indeed, but they extended their attentions no

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farther. They were gathered round Annunciata, and I should have found myself considerably embarrassed, had not one of the sisters of the white veil gently taken my hand, and drawing me down on the grass, on which she was seated, whispered to me, "We are of the same rank and degree in the house, Sister Angelique, and perhaps you may find our society quite as agreeable as that of some persons of the higher orders; at any rate," she added, "we shall not annihilate you, and reduce you to a nonentity by our superior sanctity."—"For shame, Pauline," returned a white veil on my left-hand, for I was already seated with the first who had spoken to me on my right, "will you never learn prudence?" and, leaning behind me, she whispered something in her companion's ear, which the other answered by a laugh, saying at the same time, "Nous verrons;" and then addressing herself to me, "Sister Angelique," she said, "shall I acquaint you with the state of things in this house, and explain some of our politics?"—"It would be much better for her to find them out herself," remarked the sister on my left, whose name it seems was Eustasie. By this time, two more of the sisters of the white veil had joined our party, which was a little removed from the other groups, and being invited by Pauline, sat down with us; and with them an elderly sister, who, it seems, had some sort of authority over the novices.

I had seen her several times, and she had been particularly busy while they were changing my dress. She was called la Mère Genefride; she had a remarkably good-humoured countenance, and though I think I scarcely ever beheld an uglier face under a nun's hood, yet I loved that face from the first moment I saw it, and so did every young person who ever had any thing to do with it: she was an excellent person in her way; and though a strict papist, yet she had such kindness of heart, that even the cold policy of the Roman Catholic principle had never been able to deaden her feelings. She had undoubtedly a tendency to the principles of the Jansenists, for she always maintained that kindness and love were better calculated to turn the young heart than coldness and severity: but she was extremely ignorant; her mind was not refined, and she carried her system of indulgence to such a degree, that she did not even always reprove what was really blameworthy in the young people; but the superieure winked at her in-

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discretions of this kind, as I afterward found, because her influence over the novices was so great, that more were induced by her to remain in the house, and to take the black veil under that roof, than by any other person of the society; and it must ever be remembered, that in the politics of the Church of Rome, the end always sanctifies the means.

There were five or six novices gathered together, apart from the other sisters, and la Mère Genefride in the midst of us; and Pauline was beginning, as she said, to let me into some of the politics of the establishment, when Sister Annunciata and Sister Marguerite came arm-in-arm towards us, the latter addressing me, and saying something trivial respecting the beauty of the weather, while the former, reproving Pauline, asked her if she thought it becoming to withdraw the mind of la Sposa from the great engagement she had so lately undertaken, by conversing on indifferent subjects. "Such a scene as you have witnessed to-day, my sister," she added, "ought to remind you of your own espousals, and of the important duties you then took upon yourself; do let me entreat you not to engage Sister Angelique to-day in vain discourse."

"I was but telling her of her duties," replied Pauline, "and of what our Lord requires of us as his affianced bride."

"'Tis well," said Annunciata; and she turned away with her companion, and went towards the house.

"Now our Lady of Mercy forgive me for this hypocrisy," remarked Pauline, as soon as the other was out of hearing; "but that Annunciata, and those severe ones, would make hypocrites of all the saints in the calendar, if they had to deal with them."

"Peace," said la Mère Genefride; "it is a miracle in my eyes that you have not been put in penitence before this time, Pauline. You are much to blame for allowing yourself to speak so rashly."

"Remember, gracious mother," replied Pauline, "that some deference is due to a novice. Suppose that I should take it into my head to put on my secular habits again, and say good-by to you all."

"And say good-by to Paradise at the same time," replied la Mère Genefride: "is there no such a place as hell, daughter? remember Him to whom you are affianced; can he not avenge himself?"

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"Ah! there is the rub," retorted the lively girl; "well, the Holy Virgin have mercy on us; but let me explain to Sister Angelique how things are; I will tell no secrets, I promise you. Well, to begin—here we are; there are thirty sisters of the black veil, besides madame, and the sacristine, and la mère assistante, and la bonne Mère Genefride, and poor old Mère Aymée, who was sacristine time out of mind, till she could neither see nor hear, and the six menials, and the five novices, these are our grand divisions."

"And I doubt not," said Eustasie, "that sister Angelique knows as much as this already."

"No," I replied, "I did not know exactly the number of the professed: indeed, I have always thought there were only twenty-nine."

"Humph!" said Pauline, "who told you there were only twenty-nine?

"I have often counted them in the chœur," I replied.

"There are thirty, however," returned Pauline, "there is one you have not seen yet; for when a person is pretendante, they are not to see every thing; by-the-by, I never knew a pretendante kept so close as you were; that is some new regulation, and a very good one too; very politic and discreet, without question."

"Will you be silent?" said la Mère Genefride.

"Only one word more," returned Pauline; "I simply wished to tell Sister Angelique that she will find herself more comfortable in associating with us than with the sisters who have been longer in the house."

"Mum!" said the Mère Genefride; "do you see who is coming?"

It was la Mère Ursule, and it was tolerably clear that she had come to see what we were about. She addressed me by the name of la Sposa, and said, she rejoiced to see so much divine serenity, as she was pleased to say, on my countenance. "This is a blessed day, my daughter," she added, "for you;" and she was proceeding to tell us what raptures she had herself experienced when she had thrown aside her secular habits, and entered into that holy engagement which, she trusted, would be the means of obtaining her a place in the household of her Lord for ever.

"Is there anybody in this house now, my good mother," said Pauline, in a meek tone, "who was present on that happy occasion?"

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"What happy occasion?" asked the mother.

"When you professed," returned Pauline, dropping her eyelids and looking demure.

"Was ever a question so foolishly put as this!" replied la Mère Ursule, her whole sallow face becoming suffused with an angry glow; "do you think that I am as old as la Mère Aymée?—why, though I was quite a babe when I came here, and spent all my childhood in this house, yet I know no more of her profession than you do, who were not here twelve months since."

"Oh! then I was mistaken," replied Pauline.

"Not a bit of it—not a bit of it," returned the other, "but I think I could tell you where you have made a mistake, and that of much more consequence than in my standing in the house."

"And what may that be, mother?" asked Pauline, demurely; "will you please to enlighten my dark mind by your counsels, and by informing me where I am in error?"

"Why, I think," said the old woman, with much bitterness, "that you mistook your vocation when you came to this house; and I must add, Sister Genefride, that you do not do as you should, when you allow so much license to these young girls."

"Come away!" replied la Mère Genefride, "we will speak of these things elsewhere;" and the two seniors walked away; while Eustasie said—

"There, Pauline, you will have it now; why did you provoke la Mère Ursule? know you not her influence with madame? you will certainly have a reproof."

"I am not afraid," replied Sister Pauline, "and what did I say, after all? But come with me," she said to me, "and I will show you la Mère Aymée; she is a good old creature, and I love her, and I would give my eyes to find out that la mère assistante was present at her profession; besides, la Mère Aymée is a curiosity. I love to hear her talk;" and she drew me towards a group of sisters who were sitting quietly at another end of the green bank; some of them having books in their hands, and others seeming to be engaged in that sort of namby-pamby discourse which fills up the vacant hours of those ordinary characters who make up the principal proportion of the members of religious houses; and there was enough of matter for them to fill up the leisure of that day, namely, the garniture of my toque, the pattern of

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the embroidery of Monsieur l'Eveque, and the patés and gateaux at the dejeuné, and the cut of the new face which was just introduced among them.

The sister Pauline brought me up to these, and addressing them with some commonplace remark, she sat down by them, and directed my attention to a little decrepit figure which was in the midst of them, though apparently taking no part in the discourse. "That is la Mère Aymée," whispered Pauline; "I will engage her in conversation; now listen to her, she will amuse you;" and, being seated on the grass, she put her mouth to the ear of the old nun, and said, in a distinct tone, "And how does la Mère Aymée carry herself to-day? how does this weather affect her rheumatic pains?"

Being thus addressed, the old lady lifted up her head, and exhibited a set of features wrinkled and wizened beyond what I had ever seen: but what struck me the most in her appearance was, that although the lines of age were so deeply graven on her features, there was an expression of vacancy in her eye which seemed entirely to disagree with these indications of a long-protracted pilgrimage on earth. "Did you speak, my dear?" said she, in reply to the voice of Sister Pauline; "did any one speak?"

"It was I, mother," returned Pauline; "I was asking after your rheumatism."

"Ay!" she replied, "my pains, my daughter, are blessed, since they are endured for Him we love; and He will accept them, too, as proofs of my affection for Him; and they will be so many merits to plead in my favour: but I fear they are all too few."

A slight shudder seemed to pass over the frame of Pauline as the mother spoke; but, rallying herself immediately, she said, "We wanted to know, mother, if you remember the day of your profession."

"Do I remember the day of my profession, my espousals?" replied the old nun; "to be sure I do: it was on the Fete of Cunegonde, the last Sunday of the Carnival: for I remember that Careme was so late that year, that we had green pease on Mardi gras."

"That was bad management," whispered Pauline to one of the sisters.

"And why so?" asked the person spoken to.

"Because pease are not flesh; and they would have

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mended the dinner on Mercredi de Cendres," returned Pauline.

A laugh followed this remark, which certainly was not made much in the spirit of a true daughter of holy mother church. After which, the questioning of the old religieuse proceeded. "Was la Mère Ursule in the house when you professed?" asked Pauline.

"Ay," replied the old lady, who only heard part of the question, "he was the celebrant who professed me; I remember him well, by this token, for he was a gracious and godly man; he commended the chocolate which was served at breakfast, and declared he had never tasted its like but once, and that was at the Cardinal Paoli's, at Rome."

"Chu, chu!" exclaimed Pauline, "what's all this to the purpose? I would give my ears, for, in virtue of my vow, I have little else to give, to ascertain that la Mère Ursule assisted at the profession of her venerable sister, if it were but as a pretendante, and the old lady can think of nothing but green pease and chocolate; but I will get it out of her if I can:" and putting her mouth to her ear, "Mother," she exclaimed, "mother, I say, tell me, is there any one in this house who was present when you put away your secular habits?"

"My secular habits!" replied the mother, "did I ever wear any? Was I not devoted in the cradle? Was I not taken from the breast into the arms of our Mother of Mercy? Do I remember ever stepping beyond the boundary of these sacred walls?" And she crossed herself, and raised her lustreless eyes—mumbling her Paternoster with a rapidity which long habit only could have given, and then sinking again into that semblance of almost lifeless apathy and imbecility from which Pauline had with difficulty aroused her, and from which she again awakened her but a moment afterward.

"Mother," my new acquaintance said, "I was speaking of your profession, and asking you if there is any one now in the house who was present then."

"It is fifty-eight years ago, child," replied the old lady, "fifty-eight years and four months; and there are none here now who saw me assume the bridal crown. Fifty-eight years is a long time—a long, long time to think of! ay, a long time to bear the weight of sin and infirmity, and to feel that the stain of guilt remains, after years of penitence and pain! And I have seen, in those

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years, young blooming things, like you, and you, and you"—and she extended her skinny finger towards one, and another, and a third of us, as she spoke—"grow thin, and pale, and wan, and die, and pass away. I have made friends, young, warm, kindly friends, and lost them, one by one, until all I ever loved have passed away, and are laid in their cold graves, to crumble to dust, each with her bridal crown bound on her brow. And there has no one arisen lately among you all to fill the place which is cold and vacant here," and she laid her hand upon her heart, and sighed, and mumbled another prayer, and then, looking round again, continued her address:—"And what are you, and you, and you, to me? God help you! Our Lady of Misericorde remember you! and may you all be blessed! But what have you to do—to bear with me? I am neither your mother nor grandmother: there is no connecting link of blood or of former services between us. I am old, and deaf, and dull—Libera me, Domina!" And her voice ceased to be audible, though her lips continued to move for some time after.

"Do but hear her," said Pauline, looking earnestly at me; "does not it cut your heart to hear her? God help her! and God help us also! But listen—she speaks again, and she has forgotten that we are present."

"I cannot tell what they have done to her," she said: "she was the last, and Agnace—poor Agnace—was the first. But she is not dead, though like one dead,—so pale, so cold, so still." And the venerable religieuse looked round inquiringly; but no one answered, and every eye was cast down.

"What is she talking of?" I said.

No one spoke but Pauline, who replied, "Ask her."

"Whom are you speaking of, mother?" I asked.

"Clarice," she replied; "she was a pretty creature when she first came, like a young rose-bud just opening. And she was so kind, so tender to me! She was the last young creature that seemed akin to me—that seemed to belong to me."

"And what has become of her?" I asked. "Who is she?"

The old nun made no answer, and I addressed myself to the rest of the party, but saw embarrassment so evidently traced on every countenance, that I did not press my inquiry. Yet, turning to la Mère Aymée

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again, I said, "It is fifty-eight years since you professed, and you have never been beyond these walls since that period; how does the time appear to you, dear mother; does it seem long or short? How can you distinguish one year from another in memory? You must hardly have any dates or epochs in your life."

I was obliged to repeat this question in other words before she could comprehend it; at length she replied, "It is a long time, to be sure—a long lingering time to think of! There have been three superieures since then, and our confessors have been changed many times, though Father Benedict was a long while with us, but he went at last. And I remember when this bank was laid down in grass—the vines ran over it when I came here first,—there is no one here who remembers that change: and the pines have crept up over the brow of the hill since I can remember: when I first came, one could only see the tops of them peeping up from behind."

I was going to exclaim, "What a life is this! It would be better to toil in the fields than to endure this horrible monotony;" but, recollecting myself, I said, "You have had much delight, no doubt, in thinking that you were leading a life so agreeable to the will of God—a life wholly devoted to the service of your Maker; have not you, mother?"

"Truly, truly, daughter," she replied, and crossed herself; "it is my hope that I have lived in that way which is pleasing to Him of whom I am the affianced bride. Listen, daughter! the holy Virgin dwelt in the temple of Jerusalem, and her companions were the first, among the sinful daughters of men, who were called to the profession which we have taken upon ourselves. We are the spouses of the blessed Lord; the veil we have received is that in which we shall appear with acceptance before the judgment-seat of Christ; and the crown of thorns with which we were crowned on the day of our espousals will then be changed into a crown of glory, which we shall have merited by our fidelity to those vows made in our youth; and these, my daughter, are my hopes and consolation. Nevertheless, I would willingly obtain that perfection which may render the fire of purgatory less necessary. Yet I greatly fear," and the old nun trembled as she spoke, "that by no effort of mine shall I ever be able to purify my soul from venial faults; and yet I observe the seven

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hours of prayer during the day, as well as those of the night, although I am hardly able to hobble down the stairs, and I repeat the seven penitential psalms three times in the day. And, indeed, my daughter," she added, still addressing me, "if we who are set free from the cares of the world find it so difficult to fulfil our duties, how can those poor creatures perform them who are perplexed with earthly concerns!"

How, indeed! thought I; and I perceived that there were others present who were equally impressed with this remark, and not only impressed, but perplexed, not being able to reconcile the various contradictions which presented themselves to their minds, in a religion which, the more it is thought of, seems the less consistent with itself. But reflection, and intellectual light, and reason have ever been inimical to the doctrines of the apostate church. It is true that human reason teaches nothing better: but the dominion of popery is exercised over the passions—and here its sway is great; and hence the very individuals who have seemed to escape from it during those periods of their lives when reason is most strong are caught again by it when the fear of death and judgment assails them.

A bell ringing at that moment broke up our conference; it was for "la gouté," which is a slight refreshment served in a religious house in the afternoon. Not being hungry, I asked permission of la Mère Genefride, to whom I was directed to apply, to remain alone in the garden during the repast, which request was instantly granted, accompanied with a commendation of my desire of solitude. All the sisters therefore left me, and I was glad to be alone; for I felt my mind strangely agitated, being drawn, as it were, two ways,—for, while what la Mère Aymée had said respecting that which was to follow death affected me on one hand, the idea of a long eventless life in the place where I then was filled me with terror and apprehension on the other. While occupied with these thoughts, I sought a long shady path between the cedar-trees and the lofty wall, but had scarcely traced the length of the alley, when I arrived at a grotto of shell-work in the angle of the wall, before which was a crucifix, and in the interior, in a niche of rock-work, a figure, as large as life, of the Virgin, with her infant in her arms; a little altar candelabra being placed before the figure.

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There was also an inner chamber to this grotto,—adorned with sundry superstitious devices, and round this inner chamber was a stone bench, on which I sat down to meditate. I had not, however, been alone many minutes when I heard a step, and the next moment Pauline appeared, her face being all bathed in tears. She started on seeing me, and was retreating, when I, detaining her, entreated her to tell me what had happened. "I was taken with a faintness," she said, "and they gave me leave to come out into the air."

"Sit down then," I replied, "you will be better immediately. But ah, Pauline!" I added, "this is not all; you continue to sob and to tremble. What has happened?" and I put my arms round her and endeavoured to sooth her. I know not what expressions I might have used, but, whatever they were, she seemed affected by them,—for she turned her face to me with animation, and said, "Is it possible that you should have any feeling left! and yet I forget, you have only been with us a very short time—you have not dwelt in this cold atmosphere so long as to have become a stone: but I forget again—you have been admitted only to-day into the interior of the family; you do not as yet know all the secrets of this frightful prison-house—you have not yet seen what I have seen—you are not aware of the self-tortures inflicted and required by the church—all, all of which are felt to be so inadequate for securing the end in view, that it often happens, that while the poor body sinks beneath the intolerable pressure of fasts and vigils, the mind is not delivered from the horrors of despair; and yet if these things are not endured—if some merits are not thus obtained—what is to become of the soul, the immortal, never-dying soul! Oh, Sister Angelique! how dreadful is this religion!"

"In the name of our holy mother," I exclaimed, "command yourself. What is this you say, but blasphemy?"

"True," she replied, "I speak unadvisedly; God forgive me: but had you seen what I saw but a moment since, you would have felt with me. You do not know this sweet Clarice—you have not observed the cloud which, for some weeks past, has been cast over her existence—you have not known how often of late she has been banished from our table—you are not aware that she has not been in the chœur since you arrived, though

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none but those initiated in the secrets of the superieure can tell how she has been disposed of when not seen—you did not know that she was not present at our repast this morning, nor how surprised I was to see her come in and take her place at the table just now, so meek, so sad, so fair,—that sweet pale face, lovely as a weeping madonna, being set and attuned as it were to suffering,—nor how indignant I was when I beheld that haughty Annunciata gaze on her with scorn depicted on every line of her face—scorn, and jealousy, and hatred, and suspicion, and every detestable passion. Alas! Angelique, I cannot witness these scenes and retain my composure."

I was not only terrified, but stupified by all this. "Oh!" I exclaimed, "that I had known you before I laid aside my secular habit, that I had heard all this only yesterday: but the vows we have already taken do not bind us for life. We may yet lay aside these veils."

Pauline shook her head. "I was led to think as you do once," she said; "but how is that to be? how should we be thought of in the world were we to return to it? What Catholic is there who would not despise us? and had we even affianced ourselves thus publicly to a mere human being, how could we answer it to our consciences to abandon him? Do you remember the answer you made this very day to the bishop when he said to you, Have you the will and the strength to persist constantly under the gentle yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the sole consideration of the love and fear of God?"

I sighed from the very bottom of my heart: but what could I answer? what could I say? But I was anxious to hear more respecting the sister Clarice, and I therefore did what in me lay to engage Pauline to tell me what she knew of this case, which had so much affected her: neither had I much difficulty in inducing the warm-hearted girl to be quite as communicative as I could wish. She had been, it seems, several months in the house, and had made her remarks with that deep discernment which persons use who are strongly interested in what they see: but I shall repeat what she said with more regard to order than she used in her discourse. The superieure, she said, had been about fifteen years at the head of the household, there being not above eight of the sisters who had been there before her. This lady, it seems, was not generally disliked, and made

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herself particularly agreeable to the pretendantes, and even to the novices, but was charged with undue partiality and favouritism. Her first favourite had been a sister Angelique, who had died only three or four years after her profession. Her next favourites were Annunciata and Clarice, two of the most beautiful young women who had ever been remembered in the convent. Annunciata was of very high blood, an Italian, and distantly related to the abbess. She had entered the convent at St. Siffren in a paroxysm of displeasure against her father, who, being left a widower by the death of her mother, had married again without her approbation: but it was asserted by the abbess that she had afterward taken the veil from truly pious feelings; and her conduct, which was full of zeal for the church, seemed, as my young informant said, to confirm this assertion of the abbess. Clarice was the daughter of a Sardinian lady of rank and an English gentleman, on whose marriage it had been settled that the daughters should be brought up in the faith of the true church, and the sons as Protestants; but this marriage, as might have been expected, having proved unhappy, the lady had returned to her own country, a few years afterward, bringing Clarice with her, where the child was brought up according to the faith of her mother. This lady, however, becoming a widow when Clarice was about fifteen, she resolved on marrying again; previous to which she had placed her daughter under the care of the superieure of Notre Dame de Misericorde. The consequence was, what the mother had hoped, namely, that the young girl was induced to take the veil,—Annunciata, then already professed, having been supposed to be the principal means of inducing her to take this step.

"I have heard," said Pauline, "that when Sister Clarice took the veil, she was the most lovely creature ever seen; having all the delicate bloom of the beauties of her father's land, connected with all that is admirable in the ladies of her own country. Madame used to call her her rosebud: but that bloom is past, though she is not yet twenty; and here," she added, "comes the strange part of my story. Annunciata and Clarice were, before the full profession of the latter, such intimate friends, and so beloved by the superieure, so constantly on each side of her, that it was a common saying with the sisters, Here comes the lady, with her rose

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in one hand and her lily in the other. But there was some strange tale about a little billet, conveyed through the grating in a dried sweetmeat to Sister Annunciata, which I could never understand, but which Clarice is charged with having told to the superieure in betrayal of her friend; and this charge so alienated Annunciata from her, that from that period she has been her determined enemy. And this enmity," continued Pauline, "becomes every day more and more apparent, and where it will end Heaven knows, for such is the influence of Sister Annunciata over madame, that she has lately entirely alienated her from Clarice; and there seems an inveteracy in the superieure's feelings towards this last which it is impossible to account for. Sister Clarice has, however, again and again declared that she is innocent respecting the sweetmeat, and I hope she is so," added Pauline, "for I never could have pardoned her betrayal of a friend."

I agreed in this sentiment, and she went on.

"The history of the bonbon might have first caused the breach between the friends, but there is more at the bottom of the treatment Clarice now receives than this childish tale, which is now two or three years old. Clarice certainly began to lose favour with the superieure about the time when it was said that she had betrayed some confidence of her friend, but she was not treated as she now is, even when I first came here. There was at that time in the house a certain widow lady, a Madame Barthelemis, who came here in great trouble, and held out to the community an expectation that she would profess; and she had a bad illness in the house, and Sister Clarice was much with her: but before she was quite recovered, she got a letter, informing her of the death of a friend, who had left her a large addition to her fortune. This letter, it seems, changed all her plans; from that time nothing more was said by her of the charms of a cloistered life, and she waited only till her health was restored to return to the world, in which she was then enabled to appear with some credit. Madame was excessively angry with her, and the coldness which was shown to Clarice after her departure was attributed by the sisters to her having expressed some regard for this woman; but this person has been gone four months, and the disgrace of Sister Clarice appears daily more evident; and this day, as I tell you

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when she took her place at the table, Sister Annunciata on one side of her, and la Mère Ursule on the other, shrank from her as if her touch were contamination. We had before observed that she kept very much apart from us, but we never saw any thing so decided as to-day; yet I believe, and I have several reasons for thinking so, that she has been made to suffer many secret penances for weeks past, if I can judge from the change in her appearance, for she has become miserably attenuated, and there is not now a shade of colour even in her lips."

"Of what nature," I asked, "are the penances to which we are liable?"

"To none, or at least to such only as may be easily endured, while we wear the white veil," replied Pauline; "but Heaven only knows what those unhappy ones endure who, being bound for ever to this house, may chance to incur the displeasure of the rulers. These things are kept as secret from uninitiated eyes and ears as the proceedings of that terrible and nameless tribunal of which we only hear in broken sentences, and which is seldom spoken of with impunity."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "but this is sacrilege against the Holy Mother Church. Sister Pauline, can you suppose that such a woman as madame would be guilty of secret cruelty?"

"Our Lord only knows," replied Pauline; "but power and pride and mystery are frightful things: yet I am rash! Oh! that I could restrain this ever-erring tongue,—I perhaps am offending against the innocent; and if the alternative lies between misery on earth—for to be here is misery,—for a few long weary years, and misery in purgatory, perhaps till the end of time, the superieure no doubt does right when she compels her daughters to endure penitences and pains, however severe, rather than permit them to continue even in venial sins. But oh! my sister, this religion is an awful, fearful thing,—a miserable, a terrifying consideration; and when we are told that we, the espoused of Christ, may, through the imperfection of our nature and of our duties, be condemned to ages of suffering in the flames of purgatory, what can we think? how are our hearts to be lifted up in praise and gratitude to our Redeemer? how do we feel ourselves to be objects of the divine love? Can we wonder that worldly persons should endeavour

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to throw off all thoughts respecting such a system of horrors as this! for, truly, the more a poor soul endeavours to set itself at rest by meritorious duties, such as the holy church enforces, the more it feels itself bewildered and perplexed."

In reply to all this I heaved a deep long sigh, and then said, "Do you suppose that the mass of the sisters in this establishment are as miserable as you describe yourself to be?"

"No!" replied Pauline; "no, because they are not formed either for misery or happiness. I could enumerate a dozen or more of these good honest bodies who never think at all. They trust the concerns of their souls to Father Joachim, and do as he bids them without inquiry; and as to the rest, they amuse themselves as best they may; and when one or more of them can escape observation, presently all their heads are under one hood, and then, eh! comme on jase—and oh, what little matters serve them for discourse: I have known the pattern of an embroidered stool suffice for that purpose from one morn to another. Well, and such as these are of the right stuff for nuns, granting that they can sit, or stand, or kneel in one posture, without qualms, for a sufficient length of time. No one should ever be a religieuse who has either warmth of feeling or susceptible nerves," added the lively girl; "but if it must be so, it must."

We thought, at this instant, that we heard a step. Pauline immediately drew her veil over her face, and threw herself back; "If they come in, say I am fainting; for your life don't repeat what I have said;" and we both remained quite still till the step had passed. Pauline, then springing up, said, "Don't follow me; I shall not be seen again till I can appear at the other end of the garden;" and she rushed out of the grotto, leaving me more sad, if possible, than she had found me.

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CHAPTER III.

A CONVENT LIFE.

I will not unnecessarily abridge my history, yet at the same time I would avoid being tedious; I should, however, wish to give one outline of a day spent according to the rules of our house, before I enter upon more active and, I trust, more interesting scenes; but I will not be more minute than necessary.

I shall begin with a call which I received while still meditating in the grotto, to the service called vespers, supposed to be a little before sunset; this service occupied us about one hour, and consisted of an anthem to the Virgin and several prayers. From vespers we went to supper in the refectory, or eating apartment; our supper was simple, and we all sat at one long table, according to our degrees in the establishment. I looked in vain, during this meal, for a figure answering to what I had heard of the sorrowful but beautiful Clarice. One of the sisters read during the meal from the "Lives of the Saints," which are arranged for all the days of the year. I remember that it was the history of St. Herbert and St. Claude which was read that evening. The superieure took occasion, at the termination of the lecture, to derive such morals from these lectures as she thought them most proper to convey; and these deductions, of course, all tended to prove that we ought to imitate, and even, if possible, to excel, these holy persons in the austerity of their lives, and in the intenseness of their self-imposed sufferings.

Oh! who can describe the misery inflicted by the apostate church on her unhappy children. With all her gaudy external trappings, there exists not on earth a tyrant so severe as this; and the more sincere her votary, the more cruel, bloody, and severe her pressure upon him; but let me proceed with the account of this my first twenty-four hours within the rules of the house

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Supper being finished, we again proceeded to the chœur, to the service called complines, after which we retired to bed; this was about nine o'clock; but I had hardly fallen asleep, before la Mère Genefride, knocking at my door, called me to the officium nocturnum. I hurried on my clothes, half-asleep as I was, and stepping out into the gallery, where a lamp was always burning, I saw the dark figures of the sisters passing down to the ante-chœur, in which we always assembled. The poorest captive in a dungeon, thought I, sleeps in peace during the hours of darkness; but I rejected the blasphemous thought, and accompanied my companions into the chœur. The church was lighted up, and the solemn anthem, intonated by the officiating priest, and taken up by the sisters, revived, for a time, my sinking spirits, for I felt that I had in my haste taken upon me an intolerable burthen; but the service was not very long, and I returned to my bed and slept again till just before sunrise, when I was called to the laudes; I laid down a very little while after this service. At half-after five we all arose and made our beds, according to the rules of the house, but my broken sleep had not refreshed me, and my spirits were deeply dejected. At six o'clock we were all again in the chœur; the superieure then read a passage to us from a selection taken from the gospel; it was, "Mary hath chosen the better part;" this passage, she informed us, applied to the Virgin, and was spoken of her, though by the heretics referred to Mary the sister of Lazarus; and having thus delivered herself of this false application of Scripture, we were all to meditate upon it for an hour, kneeling on our knees, and having nothing to lean against; according to the principle of the church, "the more pain the more merit." I know not how the other sisters felt themselves, or how their meditations proceeded, but for my part I could think of nothing but of the pain in my back and knees, and the sickness of my stomach: to be sure, habit does much, but I have known many sisters who could never go through this exercise without extreme suffering; but what was the use of complaining? all that ever could be got by complaining was this cold remark, "If the Almighty does not choose to render this duty easy to you, you must submit to his will; he can give strength, and he can withhold it; and if it is his will to exercise you with suffering here, you may hope that you will be

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spared in proportion hereafter." A service followed this hour of meditation, after which, those who chose to breakfast found it prepared in the refectory, but I soon perceived that the most strict of the sisters never took any refreshment at this time. There was half an hour's recreation after this, and some of us walked in the garden; but on the day I am describing, I went up to my cell and indulged in a fit of weeping, which somewhat relieved my bursting heart. Oh! how did I lament my own precipitancy. But this half-hour being over, we assembled again, and all proceeded, in threes and fours, to occupy ourselves with the affairs of the house; to some was given the care of the sacristy, to others the linen, to others the clothes; formerly, when there had been pupils in the establishment, some of the sisters had been accustomed to give them instruction at these hours, but there were none at that time; those sisters who had none of these peculiar employments occupied themselves in various works during this period, each in her own cell, as was supposed, although it often happened that we, who were novices, contrived to get two or three together, feeling sure that la Mère Genefride would not be very severe if she detected us, for although she never failed to reprove us on these occasions, perhaps to satisfy her own conscience, yet we never heard any more of her displeasure. The works with which we occupied ourselves at this time were various; some of us made sweetmeats, and dried them in the sun; others artificial flowers; some made purses, and bags, and covers of books, adorned with beads,—these were sent to Turin and sold; others embroidered the dresses of the priests; some dressed little Virgins of wax, and placed infant Christs in their arms, and made shrines for them of card-board and straw; and others cut out and emblazoned those little lace-like papers which you must all have seen.

Some of these hours which I spent thus quietly in my cell, with Pauline by my side, my dear warm-hearted Pauline, were the happiest I ever experienced in the convent; and I trust that they were not all without profit:—but to go on with my journal,—at nine we were called again into the chœur, to adore the sacrament or host. At ten we dined all together, as we had supped, in the refectory, some one reading aloud a book approved by the church, the nature of which may be

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easily conceived; after which we were left to ourselves, although under close surveillance, till noon. Then came another service called sextes, after which each of us read apart some book put into our hands by the superieure, till two o'clock, when we were assembled at the slight repast called gouté; then came the service designated nones, after which it was the custom of the family to assemble in the presence of the superieure, to receive her instruction and give an account of what each had read during the morning. Thus have I come round again to nearly the same hour of the day from which I set out, viz. the hour before vespers, at which time I was summoned with the rest into the presence of madame. I was introduced into a large Gothic hall, hung round with various paintings, representing those transactions in the supposed life of the Virgin whereupon her feasts are founded, beginning with her nativity and ending with her assumption; which tablets, in all their blasphemous absurdities, were at that time as venerable in my eyes as if the very patterns of them had been exhibited to the artist in the same manner as that of the tabernacle to Moses: for it must be remembered that at that period I had never opened a Bible. The floor of this apartment was covered with fine matting. Madame sat at a table on a sort of dais, at the upper end of the room—such was the pompous solemnity of those days—and all the members of the household, that is, all whom I had already seen, were ranged according to their respective stations and standing in the family, round the room; Pauline, as the next above me in rank, being close by my side.

It must be observed that I had not yet seen Clarice, and it was natural for me, on this occasion, to look anxiously for her; but there was not a single face on which my eye could rest for a moment with the idea that it beheld this interesting person. In the mean time the superieure, after a short dry cough and a muttered prayer, addressed us all in these words—"My daughters, remember that you have a God to adore, a Jesus Christ to imitate, all the angels to honour, the holy virgins and the saints to pray to, a soul to save, virtues to exercise, sins to expiate, a paradise to gain, an eternity to consider, a world to understand, devils to fear, passions to conquer, death to suffer, and the judgment to undergo." This I afterward found was a regular

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form used in these meetings; which being pronounced, she proceeded to inform us, that she was not going to question us as usual on what we had read, having an affair of deep interest to consult us upon. She next entered largely upon the place which had been appointed her in the church, viz. that of a spiritual mother, to whom the care of the souls of many daughters had been confided; expatiating on the cares and anxieties and painful duties of her office; describing the delight she felt when she saw her children walking in obedience to the church, and her anguish in seeing any of those, her beloved daughters, departing from the way in which they should go. She then proceeded to point out all the enemies which the members of the church had to encounter in their passage through life, viz. the world, the flesh, and the devil; enlarging on the snares of the world, and the happiness of those who, like the present sisterhood, were delivered from its delusions; making nearly the same animadversions on the second description of trials, viz. those that proceed from the flesh, though to this head she added much on the duty of mortifying the outward man, by penance and fastings; but having come to her last head, she opened her book and read what was therein contained. "The universal church always has had and always will have enemies to combat, but she has always triumphed: the infernal powers make new efforts against her every day, but they will never prevail. The holy church on earth has enemies within and without her bosom; but not to enumerate her trials with infidels, jews, heretics, schismatics, and the excommunicated, she has trials to undergo from evil spirits who endeavour to destroy her members, not only by engaging them in heresy and corruption of life, but by a thousand other artifices which are suited to the various temperaments of the persons whose destruction they meditate. Who has not heard of Antoine, the blessed father of the solitary saints, who was horribly ill used by demons, insomuch that he dared not to enjoy the consolation of sleep, and in consequence would watch for many nights together. We have examples of other holy persons being thus assaulted," she continued, closing the book at the same time, "and I believe that even in this day many Christians are tried in the same way, and that the number of those who support themselves in these sore trials is

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very small." Here she paused; and several of the older nuns, being encouraged to speak by the eyes of the abbess being directed towards them, began to repeat stories in confirmation of what the superieure had asserted, each relater making her tale more wonderful than that which had gone before, while the younger persons wondered, and trembled, and crossed themselves; and one, more considerate than the rest, inquired what could be done to enable a person to resist these attacks of the demon?

"We must watch and pray without ceasing," replied the superieure, "die to ourselves, and sustain ourselves without fainting, in the narrow road: we must seek the assistance of the church, which moans as a dove over her children about to perish; and we must submit ourselves to her spiritual authority; and not only submit ourselves, but those whom we love best, if they should be found to be in the like circumstances, that they may be instructed, and exhorted, and corrected, and punished, in order that they may be snatched, as burning brands, from the power of the devil."

A sort of groan of approbation followed this speech: but I observed that Sister Annunciata neither lifted up her eyes nor uttered a sound. I could feel, however, that Pauline trembled as she stood next to me. Something is coming, I thought, as I was all attention—of what nature can it be? and I perceived that my feelings of interest were participated by many in the room.

After each sister had told her story, that is, each one who had a story to tell, there was a pause and a dead silence, during which nothing was heard but now and then a short dry cough of the superieure, who seemed almost at a loss what next to say. At length, however, she spoke; her address, of which I cannot recollect the words, was to this effect:—that she had lately suffered cruelly from a circumstance which could not have escaped the observation of the sisters, viz. the extraordinary change which had taken place in the appearance and manner of her beloved daughter Clarice—how suddenly she had lost her cheerfulness, and her delight in her religious duties; expatiating on the coldness and reserve towards her companions, and, above all, her resolution not to open her heart to her spiritual mother, although she had sought her confidence with prayers and tears. "I have, for some weeks past," continued the lady, "en-

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deavoured to bear the burthen of this affliction in silence, trusting that the symptoms which I have observed in the unhappy young woman, and which I can only attribute to some demoniacal influence, would yield to the remedies which I insisted upon the unfortunate young person making use of: but as these symptoms, so far from giving way, become daily more apparent, I have thought it necessary to assemble the family, that you, my dear sisters and children, may add your counsels to mine, that you may unite with me in entreating the Mother of Mercy to intercede with her Son on behalf of this unfortunate one, and that you may be guards upon each other, to prevent any intercourse with the miserable creature in question. But before we proceed to determine upon the manner in which we are to conduct ourselves towards this deluded young woman, it is my wish that you should enlighten my mind by any private remarks you may have been enabled to make upon the conduct of this unhappy person."

The abbess then looked at the Sister Annunciata. The young lady raised her fine eyes, on being thus addressed, and, with a mildness of manner which pleased me at the time, begged that she might be spared the painful duty of speaking of one who had once been dear to her as the heart which beat in her bosom.

The superieure admitted her plea, and looked to la Mère Ursule, who, calling on others to witness the truth of what she said, declared that she had lately observed in Sister Clarice an evident attempt to shrink from every duty and every holy form which her Lord requires of those who are his affianced ones. "Who has lately heard her sweet voice, as formerly, leading the whole sisterhood in the litanies of our holy Mother?" she asked. "Who has seen her make the sign of the holy cross? And I am also well assured," continued the old nun, "that even when she would be thought to have dipped her fingers in the holy-water, she has taken good care that it should not touch them."

Several of the sisters, in reply to this appeal of la Mère Ursule, confessed that they had observed many indications of this kind, and had been shocked by them; and these facts being established, the next inquiry was, what could have occasioned these extraordinary symptoms?

The reply of the superieure was—"The influence of

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the demon; who," she added, "was no doubt admitted into her heart, when, through attachment to that worldly person, Madame Barthelemis, she ceased to watch and pray." And the lady then proceeded to enlarge upon the duties of prayer and fasting, adding, that she had lately been sorry to observe that the private altar of the house had not been frequented as formerly by the devout sisters; though she remembered a time in which several in the family were so thoroughly devoted that they never used their hands excepting in prayer. She then diverged to another subject, namely, the posture which ought to be used in prayer, and the manner in which the hands should be held during times of devotion. But, returning again to the principal topic, she plainly informed us that she believed Sister Clarice to be under demoniacal influences; hence that she could neither pray, nor cross herself, nor use holy-water, nor sing the litanies, nor perform any Christian exercise whatever; and that she considered it was a decided duty of the community to hold no intercourse with her, either by word or look; not to eat with her nor be seen in her company; although," she added, "we may all, singly and unitedly, pray for her deliverance. And may the holy Mother of God hear our intercessions! In the mean time," continued the superieure, "let not a word of what has passed ever transpire to those without. These things bring disgrace upon a sacred community—they argue some defect in holiness of life; and when my lord the bishop next honours us with a visit, I will consult him; that is, if the case of our unfortunate daughter and sister be not by that time ameliorated by the methods which the church prescribes in difficulties of this kind.

"Some superieures, I know, would take severer measures than I shall choose to adopt; but I am willing to try kindness first. I would wish to draw back the lost one with the cords of love; I should be sorry to use corporal confinement to this unhappy creature. Compel me not, therefore, my children, to such a measure, by your attempting to communicate with the miserable and fallen sister. Neither would I as yet wish to treat her as an excommunicated person, although I have, of late, by the advice of the reverend Father Joachim, caused her to absent herself from our society, thinking that perhaps certain private services, in my own particular chapel, would bring more benefits to her soul than she could ob-

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tain by mingling with us. But the father, not seeing that the desired result has ensued, and indeed fearing the effect of too much solitude for one who, it is thought, is too familiar with the spiritual enemy, has advised that she should again be present at the services in the church; though I cannot request my holy daughters to sit down again with her at the same table, as the father advised, observing how her presence affected some of them yesterday afternoon. She shall therefore present herself in the chœur, but she shall not take her place with her pure and holy sisters, till she is restored to the divine favour by a long and deep repentance."

The abbess then arose, having pronounced a blessing on the assembly, and, taking the arm of Annunciata, walked slowly out of the room, leaving us to give free utterance to our feelings on what had passed, for there were few among us who were not more or less convinced of the truth of all that our superieure had said to us, and of the necessity of taking some decided measures with the poor victim of these demoniacal delusions. Even Pauline, who had lately been so angry at the manner in which this poor Clarice was treated, acknowledged that if it were true that the unhappy sister could not endure the approach of the holy-water, there must needs be something very much amiss with her.

"It is a certain and incontrovertible token," said la Mère Aymée, to whom one of the sisters had been explaining such part of the discourse as she had not heard, "that a person is under the power of the demon when he cannot bear the sprinkling of the benitier. I remember that this was one of the first symptoms observed in Agnace,—but that was a long time since, when I was first made sacristine: there was a great deal of talk about it then."

"Agnace?" repeated one of the younger sisters; "who was she, mother?"

"Were you not talking of her?" returned the mother; "did you not say that Agnace—"

"The good mother is doting," exclaimed la Mère Ursule; "we were talking of poor sister Clarice. Do you hear, sister?" and she put her mouth close to her ear, "we were saying that it is a bad sign in Clarice that she cannot touch holy-water."

"And did I not say the same?" replied the old religieuse. "There can be no worse; and have I not

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often told you how that I once heard of an old monk of Laghetto, called Zephitin, who was in such a way at one time, that if one did but touch him with a feather dipped in eau benite, he would begin to tremble and quake all over, as if he had been in his death-throes? But he was prayed for by the community, and Monsieur l'Eveque came all the way from Nice up the valley, with many brethren, all in their robes, to exorcise the evil spirit. And he was as good a man as ever when the demon left him; though I have heard say he would take the tremblings again at times; and it was always observed that there was a mist rising out of the valley, which is close under the monastery, whenever these fits took him."

The vesper-bell at that instant tolling, we all hastened to the chœur, while my heart beat with anxiety to see this poor victim of demoniacal delusions, who was to appear at the service. Neither will it surprise my reader if I say that I expected to see in this Clarice some symptoms of the horrid influences under which I supposed her to be; wondering, at the same time, what she could have done, in what blasphemous thought she could have indulged, or what blasphemous action she could have performed, to have rendered herself subject to so dreadful a judgment: indeed, I was so much affected, that Pauline, who walked by my side, and guessed what was passing in my mind, said, "Fear not, Angelique, you will not see in Clarice any thing to alarm you."

The service was about to commence with an anthem, begun by the officiating priest without the grate, and taken up by the sweet voices of the sisters within, when Pauline whispered, "Clarice!" and looking to the door which led from the ante-chœur, I saw, for the first time, that beautiful creature, the idea of whom had filled my mind ever since I had heard her name. She was dressed as we were, only that she had no cross upon her breast. In her hand she held a wax taper, but it was not lighted. My reader will understand the emblem. She stepped no farther than the door-sill, and there stood so fixed and motionless as to show like a beautiful statue, placed within a magnificent frame of the fine Gothic order. Her eyes were fixed upon the pavement at her feet, and I saw not that her eyelids moved. A stream of violet light, passing through an upper compartment of the deep-stained storied windows,

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rested on her figure and on the side of her face, giving a splendour to her form and features which no pencil could imitate. And truly, I thought that I had never seen or imagined a human form or set of features so exquisitely lovely as those of this fair and meek religieuse; and yet I could hardly describe the sort of fascination which riveted my eyes on this sweet Clarice, insomuch, that having once looked on her, I could not turn away, or think of any thing but her. Was it the expression of deep humility and gentleness, meekness and peace, and that in one of whom I had just heard spoken as the victim of demoniacal influences? But I had not yet seen her eyes, though I had observed the long dark fringes which rested on her marble cheeks. Oh! that I could see those eyes! I thought; but the service went on, in all its musical monotony, and was nearly finished, when a pigeon, pursued by some bird of prey, flapped against the highest pane of one of the windows of the chœur, making its escape from its enemy into the sanctuary through a casement which was open, a little below where it first struck.

The noise attracted every eye, but I turned again to Clarice, and saw that she, too, was looking up: her eyes were fixed on the frightened bird, which had settled for a minute on the ledge of a mullion of the window; and it seemed as if this little incident had roused her from the stupor of continual grief, for a brilliant colour mantled in her cheeks, and her eyes, of dark and rich blue, expressed an interest which, a moment before, I should have thought it impossible so small a matter could excite; but the service was concluded, and the meek and suffering sister was thereby admonished that she must stand aside, lest her touch should contaminate the solemn procession of her former companions, now arranging themselves to pass out from the chœur.

Having found it necessary to be very particular in many parts of my story which have gone before, and as it will be equally necessary to be particular in some future scenes, I would willingly hasten over some of the minor events which are now to come. From the period of my profession, several weeks passed over with but few incidents. I think it could not be more than three, because in that time I did not see Madame Verani once, and we were permitted to see our friends once a month; but otherwise there are no epochs by which I could

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mark this time, in which no change whatever took place. Oh, who that has not felt it can conceive the horrible monotony of the mode of life I had so precipitately adopted! in which there was gloom without privacy, dulness without ease, idleness without rest, labour without profit, religion without peace, society without amusement, intimacy without confidence, and pain without reward,—not even the reward of a good conscience; for the desire of accumulating good works, and keeping a stock of merits, which, after all, is the leading principle of monastic life, may be compared to the insatiable appetite for gold, which becomes the more voracious by indulgence, insomuch that the wretched miser only feels himself the more needy in proportion as his treasure accumulates, and the more uneasy from feeling how liable he is to be deprived of this treasure, not only by the various accidents of life, but by those also of death. In the same manner the poor penitent, in the apostate church, labours through each weary hour to augment his merits; feeling, at the same time, how entirely these may be rendered null, even in the last hour of his life, by some failure in the required forms, and found not adequate in that hour of trial which follows death. Not so the true believer, whose dependence is on the merits of the Redeemer, and whose treasure, even the righteousness of Christ, is laid up for him where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. But at the time of which I speak, I did not, by any means, understand the impossibility under which a corrupt creature lies of establishing such a merit for himself as may render him acceptable in the eyes of a holy God: nay, I not only believed that this might be done, but that it had been done in thousands of instances, though I did not feel how I could do it; and, strange to say, I found myself farther from what was right after having been some weeks in the convent, than I had done when in the world.

The discourse of the superieure on the power of demons had struck me much, added to which all the strange stories supplied by the sisters, and the mysterious situation of Clarice, together with sundry inquiries suggested by my own mind concerning the nature of the temptations which might, in solitude, be brought to act upon the heart, inquiries which were not unfrequently helped forward by the sort of reading to which I was condemned, worked most strangely, and in a man-

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ner to me wholly unprecedented, within my breast, insomuch that I could not have concealed from Father Joachim, even had I wished it, the nature of the tumult within me. Then followed many searching inquiries from the confessor, with many severe injunctions respecting confession, and threats of future terrible punishment, should I fail in laying open my whole heart to my spiritual guide; the good father adding, "that the very dread of having such thoughts to confess would prevent me from indulging in them." But the father was greatly mistaken; he did not know human nature; neither did they know it, whatever their intentions might have been (and I hope they were not all bad), who enforced the duty of repeating dull forms of prayer eight times in the twenty-four hours to young things in the heyday of life, by which forms the mind was left to exercise itself as it would. Oh! how did the enemy flow in like a flood, during those times, into my heart! how did gayety, and pleasure, and ambition present themselves to my mind, and fill my whole soul even at the very time that I knelt at the chœur, seeming to those without the very image of sanctity; and then again what horrors would occasionally seize my mind during the intervals of these reveries, so that with one strange feeling and another, I was as a vessel tossed on a stormy sea, and removed farther and farther from the haven of peace. My health, too, so far gave way that I was a prey to a constant feverish lassitude; and I observed that many of the younger sisters were affected in that same way. Others, again, were more decidedly injured by the mode of life we were obliged to lead; and, no doubt, had not circumstances prevented it, which I hope to explain hereafter, I should have seen more than I did descending to an early grave. There were some, however, among the sisters, who, having stood the seasoning, had become so inured to the mode of life as not to appear to be sensible of its fatigues: but these were comparatively very few; and I have often been astonished to think what some of these few could go through in the way of long self-imposed fasts, protracted kneelings, exposure to cold, hard couches, and interminable severities. One of the most determined of these seeming self-tormentors, and real tormentors of others, was la Mère Ursule—a creature all bone and sinew, horn and gristle, of an iron constitution, naturally deficient in feeling; yet, as Pauline used

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to observe, she was the very stuff of which an eminent santa should be made. But, as I was saying, three weeks, more or less, having passed without any changes since my profession, which three weeks had served to give me a very clear idea of the tenor of life to which I had thus hastily condemned myself, one night it happened that, during the nocturnal prayer, the sister Clarice, who had been present at every service, standing in the place I have described, suddenly dropped her taper; and while we looked at her it was evident that she was in the act of fainting. Pauline and I had often talked her case over in retirement, and, notwithstanding that we did not question what the superieure had said, respecting her being under the influence of some evil spirit, yet we could not help saying that we feared she was too harshly treated, secretly wishing that we could find an opportunity, unobserved, of showing at least that we sincerely pitied her, and sympathized in her sufferings: but she was never present with us but in the chœur, and where she spent the rest of her time we knew not. There was a part of the house, the passages to which were by doors at the end of the gallery, below and above, into which we had not yet been admitted. This part of the building contained the private apartments of the superieure, and some large chambers which were occupied by the sick on occasion of any severe illness. Here also was a tower, commanding the town, which had been resigned, for years past, to the owls and bats, which always take possession of any deserted building. We believed that the sister Clarice slept in some of these chambers, and that she was then under the especial surveillance of madame. However, during the night I speak of, this poor young creature, who no doubt had suffered greatly, was so far exhausted that she dropped her taper, and was falling, when Pauline, who was ever most prompt in every act of kindness, flew across the chœur, followed by me, and arrived just in time to break the fall of the fainting sister. With my help she lifted her up and carried her to a bench in the ante-chœur, where, without thinking who might hear, or what consequences might follow, she poured out to her, as she revived, many of those sweet feelings of compassion which had so long dwelt in her heart.

It would have been entirely dark, had it not been for the solitary lamp suspended from the vaulted ceiling

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of the ante-room; and the voices of the sisters in the chœur, singing the midnight chant, were the only sound which stole on the ear, with the exception of the sweet accents of pity poured forth by Pauline.

"What is the matter, dear sister?" she said; "why are you separated from us? Why can you not be with us as before? Resist the evil one, and he will flee from you; the church is all-powerful; use the means which are provided for the victory over the enemy; there are many among us who love you dearly. Here is my own Angelique, though a stranger to you, she has wept with me and prayed for you, with the real kindness of a sister—say you love us, gentle Clarice—say you love us—and return and be with us as before."

"Oh! beloved Pauline," replied Clarice, "sweet sisters, and do you not wholly reject and abandon me?" and, seated as she was, she threw her arms round Pauline and wept abundantly.

"Then you will, dear sister, you will be what you once were?" said Pauline. "They charge you with refusing to obey the ordinances of the holy church—of showing contempt of our sacred mysteries. Will you acknowledge your offences, if you have been justly charged, and pray to be restored?"

"Oh, my God!" replied Clarice, lifting up her united hands, "have mercy on me, have mercy on me, and give me strength—strength to say—it cannot be—it must not be!"

"What cannot, must not be?" asked Pauline; but before Clarice could reply, we were aware of the presence of Sister Annunciata.

The beautiful nun stood directly where the lamp shed its strongest ray upon her face. A calm severity expressed itself in her fine features, and raising her hand, "Go, Clarice!" she said, "leave these holy sisters: be not, as a second Satan, beguiling the children of Paradise. Withdraw to your chamber: affect not a weakness you do not feel. He that has strengthened your will against the Almighty will assuredly assist you in this present hour of need;" and her upper lip curled, as it were with scorn, as her eye followed the trembling Clarice, who was passing slowly along the vaulted passage which led from the ante-chœur, at the command of one who had once been to her as the dearest of dear friends. But Pauline could not bear to witness

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this cold and cruel scorn, and no sooner had the figure of Clarice disappeared in the gloom than she broke forth in high and beautiful indignation:—

"Does it become you, Annunciata," she said, "you who were once to her as a friend most dear, to point the arrow which is to pierce her, who is already wounded to death? Grant that she has fallen, who was once the light, the glory, the beautiful ornament of the community—who shall say but you may next become an object of scorn for others? Who has armed you with a strength that cannot fail? May not your very pride, your sense of your present sanctity, be the very quarter in which the enemy may attack you? But we have seen, we have understood in what scale your influence has been laid, and I will be plain with you; we think that the severe measures which you have abetted, if not counselled, have riveted the chains which have bound this unhappy Clarice."

It was impossible to stop Pauline by any hint that I could give her, till she had run herself out; and it was too suitable to the policy of Sister Annunciata to suppose it possible that she should attempt to stop any one who, through anger, enthusiasm, or any other excitement, was in danger of betraying any secret feeling, either of her own or of another. However, when my friend had said all that is recorded above, and a great deal more, she answered, calmly, "This is an affair for the consideration of madame, and to her it must be referred: for the present, our superior duties call us to the conclusion of the service. Madame has sent me to request the immediate return of Sister Pauline and Sister Angelique to the chœur." So saying, she walked majestically before us, while we followed, all trembling with contending emotions, of which those of fear, and almost of hatred, were the predominant.

It was not to be expected that the indiscretion of Pauline would be disregarded. It is, however, one of the characteristics of a monastic establishment, that the displeasure of the superieure does not always break out immediately, but, like a volcano, may burst forth at any time, though oftentimes without any previous mutterings. Madame looked as serene, and Sister Annunciata as impenetrable, the next morning, as if nothing uncommon had taken place. We observed, however,

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that poor Clarice did not appear, neither did I ever see her again in the chœur.

I had to attend the confessional that morning, and, as I expected, Father Joachim pressed me closely respecting Clarice. It was right, I knew, to confess my own opinions relative to her case, but I was careful of what I said of those of others. I however let it appear that there was a sort of idea in the house, that Clarice had perhaps been too much tempted, and that it was thought that some of the symptoms which appeared so strange in her might perhaps have originated in terror. I also hinted that although, as a novice, I could not possibly return to the world, yet that there were other convents in the country; and that I knew one of the order of St. François de Sales, which had been highly spoken of. I threw out this hint on purpose, although I had already formed an attachment so strong for Pauline, that I had secretly resolved that I would not leave the house in which I then was, excepting in company with her. My reader, perhaps, may not understand, that a novice may change her convent—not so a religieuse, who has taken the black veil.

The father took no notice of this hint, but told me in confidence, that there was a something in the case of Clarice which would render it advisable for me to avoid her society, and not to speak of her among my friends. "We are willing," he added, "to restore her by kindness, if possible. And if the most earnest prayers of sinful mortals can prevail, mine, and those of the excellent lady Madame la Superieure, for this unhappy young woman, will, in the end, restore her to the bosom of her spiritual mother. But at present, my daughter, let the matter rest, and give us credit for desiring to use the utmost kindness which the eternal interests of the soul of the wanderer will permit."

I would have replied, but he dismissed me; and from that time, for several weeks, things went on much as usual. Clarice did not attend our public services indeed, or join us at our meals, but she was at large in the house, and I sometimes passed her in the gallery, though I never addressed her. Indeed, I could not have done so, had I wished it, for we were too carefully watched.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE SECLUDED SISTER

About this time I had a visit from Madame Verani. The superieure accompanied me to the grate; we therefore could have no private conversation—indeed, all our discourse was upon the state of public affairs. I do not intend to mention the exact year in which I took the white veil, but it may be understood, when I say that it was coincident with the period in which the revolutionists of France, having excited furious and bloody tumults throughout their own country, first burst their bounds, and began to excite the same confusion in the Sardinian dominions as they had done at home. Madame Verani brought an account of their actually being in the capital, and of certain ravages which they had committed there; "but I trust," she added, "that they will not find their way to St. Siffren; it is so much out of the beaten track, so withdrawn within the hills, that we have nothing to fear."

The destruction made in the religious houses of France was then spoken of, and the abbess expressed great alarm, lest circumstances of this kind should take place in this country.

The sister Eustasie was to take the black veil in a few days; and Madame Verani asked the abbess if she would take care that she had seats to see the ceremony. I thought my friend spoke with a peculiar meaning when she asked the favour. I had learned to read books with some accuracy since I had been an inhabitant of a convent, but of course made no remark. She took occasion, shortly afterward, to ask me if I had formed any particular friendship in the society; and whether the young ladies were in general of foreign or Sardinian families.

"We have," I replied, "several French, one Italian, and one English sister."

"And who may this last be?" asked the abbess.

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I was about to say, "The sister Clarice," but recollecting that the name always excited displeasure, I hesitatingly answered, "One, madame, whose father was an Englishman."

"Yes," she replied, "an English heretic."

These words were uttered in a low and bitter tone, but they were not lost on Madame Verani; however, she took no notice, and soon afterward took her leave.

I have said before that the ceremony of a profession afforded something like a holyday and a bustle in the house. The assumption of the black veil, however, differs so little in form from that of the "ceremonial des vestures," as the putting off of the secular garments is called, that I shall not enlarge upon it. This last ceremony is, however, still more solemn than the former, inasmuch as it is more irrevocable. But I was a spectator in this last scene, and therefore had leisure to observe more of what was passing than when I was the principal actress. I was so situated within the grating that I could now and then get a glimpse of Madame Verani, whom I loved better than ever I had done before. She was sitting next to the railing of the altar, on the right side of the church, and, from being thus situated, having the most perfect view of the opening from the high altar into the chœur, which was on the left side of the altar. M. Verani was seated at her left-hand, and on her right, was a young gentleman, who, for want of room, stood during the whole time of the ceremony, leaning against a pediment of one of the arches which sustained the roof of the church. It did not happen, however, that my attention was at all attracted to this gentleman.

I had never before witnessed the ceremonial of the black veil, and was in consequence deeply affected by it; but there were others in the chœur who had seen it often; and as forms, however solemn and well arranged, always lose their effect by repetition, so these were not affected as I was—they were sufficiently at ease to look about them through their bars.

Nuns have eyes as well as other people; and they will now and then talk nonsense, as well as persons of their own age in the profane world. Accordingly, when we came out of the chœur, and were at our treat in the refectory, the higher powers being engaged at breakfast with Monseigneur l'Eveque and the rest

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of the company, something was said of the handsome stranger who stood by Madame Verani during the service; and I was asked if I were acquainted with him?

"What was he like?" I answered, for, as I before said, I had not observed his figure or face.

Immediately a number of particulars, forming together an unusually handsome man, were enumerated; as, for instance, bright auburn hair, a blooming complexion, perfectly regular features, &c. But I was not able to help forward any conjectures respecting this young gentleman, and we were pursuing this discourse, which might have carried us farther than we intended, when one of the most staid of our party having remarked, that conversation of this sort was not what should be among veiled and cloistered nuns, no further observation on the young stranger was made, than that he had frequently looked earnestly through the gratings, and had been visibly affected when the black veil had been put over the head of the sister Eustasie.

It is a credit to our society to be able to add, that I am not aware that I ever heard any light discourse among the sisters. There were, no doubt, in our society characters of various descriptions, but the fault of the establishment was not that of levity; such as is attributed to the religious houses in many continental countries. If any vice of this kind existed among us, which, from some circumstances that have come to my knowledge since I left the house, I have great reason to suspect, they were covered with a thick, and to me at that time impenetrable veil of hypocrisy; and as my beloved Pauline was, I sincerely believe, even in her darkest state, a subject of grace, by being constantly associated with her, I was preserved from one of the worst effects of the unnatural system of shutting up numerous idle-minded persons in one house, namely, that species of communication which is not convenient.

When the repast was concluded, we all went out to enjoy ourselves in the garden; Pauline and myself being, as usual, side by side, and availing ourselves of the opportunity of conversing more freely than we were often able to do. Our conversation, as might be expected, soon turned upon the unhappy Clarice, and we occupied ourselves for some time with conjectures respecting the reasons of the severe treatment to which

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she was subjected, being, as it were, an outcast from all society.

"What can her crime have been?" said Pauline; "what mysterious offence can she possibly have given? Do you believe what they tell us respecting her being under diabolical influence? Think you not that they have some end of their own to answer by treating her as they do? Truly, Sister Angelique, I wish that I could get rid of the strange thoughts which haunt me continually.

"I have relations in Switzerland," she continued, "who are of what they call the Reformed Church. I have never seen any of them but my cousin Wilhelm: he would have induced me to read the Holy Scriptures and judge for myself; but I was offended at this proposal, and insisted, on my part, that he should abandon his religion as a proof of the regard he professed for me. This he would not do, and I was angry with him; and in my anger allowed myself to be persuaded to throw myself into the net in which I am now involved. Oh! that the thoughts which now torment me had come before it was too late;" and she wept more bitterly than I had ever seen her weep before. But presently recovering herself, she said, "Sister Angelique, do you recollect the answer in the Catechism of the Bishop of Montpellier, respecting prayer? namely, 'We ought to pray to God only as the source of all good, and of all graces, and to Jesus Christ as our only Mediator. We may pray to the Holy Virgin and the saints as our intercessors near to Jesus Christ.'"

"I recollect this passage," I replied; "but what then?"

"I hardly know what to say more," added Pauline; "but do not be angry with me; how are these saints to hear our prayers? Can created beings be present everywhere? and can there be holiness inherent in images made by man's hand? For instance, did I not but yesterday break, by accident, a petit Jesus de cire, smashing it all to pieces? was I then guilty of any horrid sacrilege? Do help me to disembarrass my ideas, for they are all confusion. I have heard of good men objecting to the honouring of images; do you think poor Clarice has any strange notions of this kind?"

"Pauline, you terrify me," I answered; "in the name of the Mother of Mercy say no more. Have I not

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heard you say that a religieuse has no business to reason or think! We have placed our consciences, our eternal concerns, in the hands of our spiritual rulers, and we must not now retrace our steps."

"True," replied Pauline, "too true; but this poor Clarice. I have been trying to discover where she sleeps and eats, and I think I have succeeded. It was last night I thought I heard a step in the passage just before midnight, and fearing I was too late for the service, I dressed in haste, and stepped into the gallery. I saw the door at the end open, and a sister passing along the chamber within, bearing a light. I was curious, and followed her quietly. I saw her turn into the gallery which leads to the apartments of madame, and open a door on the left and go in. She had something in her hand, which she carried into that room. I heard her also speak to one within, and I heard some one answer; I am sure that it was poor Clarice who spoke. Oh! Angelique, what would I give for half an hour's conversation with that unhappy creature! I am convinced that there is some mystery in her case with which we are not permitted to be acquainted."

"It may be so," I answered; "but did you get back to your cell unseen?"

"I did," she replied; "it was la Mère Ursule whom I had followed, and she did not discover me."

It was a few days after this conversation that my friend, Madame Verani, presented herself at the grate, desiring to see the superieure. When madame appeared, she made out a very plausible excuse for her appearance, stating that she was anxious to show her some letters, which she had received from the capital, touching the troubles which had already taken place there; at the same time begging her so far to depart from the rules of the house as to permit her to see me only for a few minutes. "My friend," she added, "had at one time a strong inclination to enter into a particular convent at Turin, and I wish to tell her something which I have heard very much to the disadvantage of that house, by which I hope to settle her mind more to her present blessed situation. But I must do this with address," she added, "and therefore, if you could let me see her, and permit me to converse with her in your presence, I could introduce the subject as if accidentally, and thus effect my purpose, which is to induce her

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to settle her mind to her present happy abode." All this was afterward told me by my friend, who, at the same time, described the alacrity with which the abbess swallowed the bait, and sent for me. But I had scarcely arrived behind the grate, when Madame Verani found another letter for the superieure, giving an account of an attack made by the French upon the convent of St. Claire, at Nice; the holy building having been already converted into stables for the republican armies, and the sisters dispersed; an account which the superieure read with such intense interest, that it had power entirely to withdraw her attention from me. Nay, she was so disturbed, that she retreated to the door to call la Mère Ursule to hear the recital of these horrors; and staid there so long as to give my friend sufficient time to put a small packet into my hand, and full opportunity for me to conceal the same in my wide open sleeve, which was all duly performed before the abbess returned to my side, accompanied by her assistant. But whether it was my own consciousness or not, I thought that, notwithstanding her agitation, she gave me a searching look; yet I believe this was fancy, for the next minute she afforded me a very good opportunity of relieving myself of the packet, by sending me to look for the sister Annunciata. I had to run across a long passage, where I met my faithful Pauline. I committed my packet to her, and ran back, after calling Annunciata, as rapidly as I could, in order not to excite suspicion; and truly I thought that the hour which we afterward spent at the grille, talking over the public news with Madame Verani, was the longest I ever experienced in my life. Nevertheless, I had many other tedious hours to spend in suspense, for it was not till after breakfast the next day that I dared to examine what the little parcel contained. Then, being shut up with Pauline in my cell, and having our work littered about us, to catch the eye of the kind Mère Genefride, who waged eternal war with any thing like slovenliness, should she come in, we opened the envelope. It contained several folded sheets closely written. The first sheet was a letter from Madame Verani, imploring me to be secret and cautious, and not to betray her or the friend who had used this means to get a letter conveyed to the hand of a beloved sister, of whom he had, for several days past, taken every possible means of obtaining a sight.

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"He is," said Pauline, "the fine youth who was in the church, when Sister Eustasie took the vail."

Madame Verani's letter contained little of importance; we therefore hid it for the present, by a contrivance not necessary to explain, and proceeded to examine the other papers. The first of these sheets contained an earnest petition to the amiable and pious Sister Angelique to assist a brother in conveying a remembrance to a beloved sister, whom he never expected to see again on earth. The arguments which he used were such as I could not have resisted, even had not Pauline supported his pleas with all the warmth of her natural character.

The remainder of this letter contained a short but affecting history of the writer himself. It stated what Pauline had before told me of the family of Clarice; for my reader has already, no doubt, conjectured that it was the brother of that unhappy young lady who had taken these means to cause a communication to reach his sister. It informed me of the name of the family, which was Beaumont—it spoke of the marriage of his father with a Sardinian lady—of their separation on account of the difference of their religion—of her return to her own country, with her daughter—of the subsequent death of the father—of the mother's marriage, and total desertion of her former family, having had several children by her second husband.

The letter then proceeded to describe somewhat more at length the strong attachment which had subsisted, in infancy, between Emily and Edward; "for," said the writer, "we were twins—we were rocked in the same cradle, and lay at the same time on the same breast, and so great was the resemblance between us, as babes, that a stranger could hardly have distinguished us. It seemed, he continued, as if Providence had brought us into the world at the same time, to point out that it was not according to the divine pleasure that we should be separated by the diversity of the religious opinions of our parents. Nor, indeed, did we experience the dreadful consequences of this diversity till we entered our seventh year; for, till that time, being kept in the nursery, under the care of a pious female servant, we were accustomed to kneel together in prayer, morning and evening—to listen to the same histories, chosen from Scripture for our instruction by our faithful nurse—to

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look to one Saviour, to hope for one heaven, and to dread one fate, in case of our rejection of that Saviour. We were happy then, and were as two birds singing on one branch; and it was not the fault of our faithful attendant, if that branch were not the Holy One of Israel. But we were separated in our seventh year, and after my father's death I lost sight of my mother and sister: yet I might add, in the words of a beautiful song of my own country,

'Though lost to sight, to memory dear.'

My own sweet Emily—my little, gentle Emily, for she grew not, nor lost a single charm of infancy in my imagination, was the object of all my boyish dreams, and of many of my waking thoughts. At length, being set free from tutors and governors,—an event which took place only a few months since,—notwithstanding the difficulties of the times, I came to Geneva; where I fell into company with a Swiss gentleman, who had, he informed me, a relation in the same convent in which I understood my sister to be. Having arrived at St. Siffren, I delivered a letter, which my friend in Geneva had procured for me, to the excellent Madame Verani. She entered at once into all my feelings, and advised me not to tell my name, but to pass for a Swiss; while she most kindly took upon herself to inquire for my sister. This she has done several times, but with such ill success, that we know not what to think: and, as a last hope, we have applied to you, most honoured and respected lady, in the full confidence that if any principle which I cannot understand should prevent you from conveying a letter, which I have ventured to inclose in this, to that sweet sister, the memory of whom can be effaced only by death, you will not so far resent my boldness as to betray my presumptuous confidence." This letter was signed "Edward Beaumont."

My letter contained one to poor Clarice, which I gathered up carefully with the other papers, and secreted in a place where I felt assured that they would not be easily discovered; which being done, we were obliged to hasten to the service, in which we were required to adore the host, with minds as little prepared for such service as those of any honest papists could possibly be supposed to be.

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My friend Pauline, who became every day more and more dear to me, took the earliest opportunity after this service to say to me, "Sister Angelique, Clarice must and shall have her brother's letter; it will be a consolation under her sufferings. It is sweet to think that there is one at least in the wide world that has not forgotten a poor religeuse;" and she wiped away a tear.

Whither had her thoughts then wandered? Perhaps to some ground forbidden by the tyrant superstition: but she recovered her firmness in a moment, and said, "I have long had strange conjectures: they have come unbidden guests, but they will not withdraw."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"My thoughts respecting that poor persecuted one," she answered, fixing her eyes upon me, "are not what they would have them to be; they are not the same as yours."

"How do you know what I think of her?" I asked. "You know that I would comfort her if it were in my power; but still I think—"

She took up my words, "That she is much to be condemned, and ought to be treated with some severity."

"And did you not think with me once, Pauline?" I replied.

"I did," she answered; "but thoughts, like guests unbidden, have intruded themselves within my breast, and compel from me a better entertainment every day. Nay, more; all that is without, all that I see and hear, administers to these unbidden guests."

"Truly," I replied, "you must speak more literally before I can comprehend you."

"But if I am not at present minded to be more explicit, Sister Angelique, what then?" she answered, somewhat of her natural archness breaking through a deep shade of sadness, which had sat on her features for some time past: "but Clarice shall have her letter, even if I am fed on soup maigre and lentiles for a month to come. Let it be placed where either of us may know where to run for it; and if one or other of us do not find an opportunity to deceive them, we have not profited by our residence in this house half so much as some who are counted far greater saints than we are."

"But, sister," I answered, "who are those whom we are meditating to deceive, but our spiritual guides and rulers? and how are these deceptions to redound

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to our eternal welfare? Grant that these are only venial sins; how many years, nay, ages of misery, may they cost us in the flames of purgatory? For although," I added, "we are taught that our Lord will preserve us, his espoused, from the fires of hell, yet he will assuredly submit us to the purification of purgatory, to cleanse us from our venial sins, of which these acts of deception are undoubtedly none of the lightest."

It may be well to remark, in this place, that the papists entertain ideas respecting sin totally contrary to Scripture, wherein it is asserted that he who offends the divine law in one point is guilty of all: whereas the Roman Catholic church classes all sins under two heads,* namely, mortal and venial; the mortal sins being seven in number, namely, pride, avarice, luxury, anger, gluttony, envy, and idleness,—these being capable of changing their nature, and becoming venial, under certain modifications.

But I am forgetting myself, and losing the thread of my narrative. I had been pleading the horrors of purgatory to Pauline, to which pleadings she made answer, "Well, be it so," and she sighed deeply; "yet there is one comfort remaining, and that is, that our superiors, who by their harshness have compelled us to these acts of hypocrisy, have a good chance of suffering with us; —for they ought to know, if their hearts are not of stone —which I have sometimes thought—that whenever no respect is paid to natural feelings, hypocrisy will assuredly find a place to insinuate her temptations. But at all events, poor Clarice shall have her brother's letter. Were it an epistle of another description, I would have no hand in it; but if any contrivance of mine may prevail, I say she shall have the letter."

It was not in me to oppose my warm-hearted friend, neither was Pauline baffled in her attempts to convey the letter to the hand for which it was intended, though several days passed before she found the propitious moment. But one morning, after the midnight prayers, having observed that madame had left the door to her suite of apartments open, she came to my cell—took the letter, and ran out again, saying that I should hear of her success or defeat during the day.

She was successful; she crept in the dark to the door

* Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites.

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which she supposed to be that of Clarice, and having ascertained, though the undertaking was hazardous, that she was not mistaken, she slipped the letter under the door, and returned to her own cell.

I could not but heartily rejoice at the success of her scheme, although during all that period, while carrying on any deception, as it regarded my superiors and those to whom I had, as it were, vowed obedience, I was truly miserable. Every thing like peace, whether well or ill founded, was banished from my mind; I felt myself every instant on the eve of detection, and what I then considered as an important duty, namely, confession, was, as it were, a net in my path, involving me deeper and deeper in the sin of hypocrisy. But it was impossible to confess to Father Joachim what I had done for Clarice; although I was apprehensive that the shrewd confessor had many suspicions that I was keeping something in the background, which he would have been particularly glad to be made acquainted with.

It happened, however, that being one day much troubled in mind, from the necessity in which I felt myself of concealing the art which I had used in the affair of the letters from my confessor, I happened to take up the Theological Catechism of the Jesuits, and there, to my great delight, in the chapter on Confession, I found the following question and answer:—

"*Q.* Is the confession of sins necessary to salvation?

"*A.* Yes, if the sins are mortal; for, as to those which are venial, there is no obligation to confess them."

"Deception," I thus argued with myself, "is not a mortal sin, therefore it is not necessary for me to confess it. Yet, if I do not confess it, I shall receive no absolution for it; then the guilt will continue to lie at my door, and I shall be liable to the punishment." Thus I reasoned with myself, becoming more and more perplexed, and feeling, from day to day, less confidence in the confused and contradictory system on which I was required to rest an implicit faith. Many papists have, I firmly believe, been carried through their lives without being subject to any doubts respecting the power of their church to uphold them through all spiritual difficulties, and to ensure their eternal interests in a better world and I also trust that when the secrets of all hearts shall

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be opened, it will be found that even within the courts of this great temple of Baal, there is a large remnant of those who are saved according to the election of grace. Yet this I may assert, that I have never seen a member of the Roman Catholic church entirely at ease respecting his salvation: the very best of them hold the opinion that they may be lost in the eleventh hour, even granting that they have lived in a state of grace until that period,—nay, in the last moment of that hour, through the neglect of some form. For the Romish church rejects the doctrine called the assurance of faith, or final perseverance, which, in fact, can never be held by a church which places any dependence on works or forms. Neither does any Roman Catholic, however firm his faith may be as it regards the final salvation of his soul, feel himself entirely relieved from the dread of the purifying fires of purgatory, which, after all, present no very agreeable prospect to a timid and doubting spirit.

But, although things went on much in their usual dull routine in the house, after that Clarice had obtained her letter through the active zeal of Pauline, the interest which I had expressed for her, in my private conferences with Father Joachim, together with several expressions of uneasiness respecting the manner in which she was treated, and the confinement to which she was condemned, for we saw less and less of her, rendered it necessary, in the opinion of our superiors, that this spirit of dissatisfaction should be set at rest, especially as the times were unsettled, and the alarms from the French were becoming every day more loud and threatening; although we, in the interior of the household, were not permitted to know any thing of what was feared without. Accordingly, one afternoon, at the hour in which we usually met in the hall to give an account of what we had read during the day, we were surprised to find the confessor with the superieure.

I have not yet described Father Joachim: he was a man of a certain age, rather short of stature, having a florid complexion, his hair inclined to be sandy, his eyes small, gray, and lustreless; he wore a black scull-cap, and his hands were particularly pale and cadaverous; but he knew his trade—or business—or what shall I say?—particularly well; and the superieure could not have had one who would work more cleverly into her

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hands, in all the political arrangements of the household. We knew perfectly well, when we saw the father in conversation with madame, that he was not there for nothing, and Pauline gave me a look which was full of meaning and of apprehension. We were directed to take our places as usual, according to our standings, around the room, but not to sit down: and when this was done, the superieure spoke, and, having slightly referred to what had passed at the midnight service, when poor Clarice had fainted, she addressed the novices with much kindness and suavity of manner, saying, that as we were as yet young and inexperienced, she thought it very possible that we might not understand her dealings with her unfortunate daughter, the sister Clarice, and that even, from the mild appearance of the unhappy sister, we might actually doubt whether she really were under that dreadful state of delusion which she too well knew that she actually was.

She then proceeded to say, that having consulted the reverend father then present, he had advised that the sister should be exorcised, and then brought to a test in the presence of the whole family; which test, if she could endure it, would prove her sane, and, if she could not endure it, would at least prove to the family that the evil did exist, which was by some persons doubted.

The father then spoke, and promised that the test should be so easy that no one could possibly disapprove it; and that every one present should be subjected to it, in order to render the ceremony more easy to the unfortunate person in question.

All this appeared to be very open and candid, and even kind, and seemed to meet with general approbation. Accordingly, the superieure ordered all the windows to be shut, lighted tapers to be set on the table, and a large crucifix, with a bowl of eau benite to be placed upon the table. La Mère Ursule was then directed to bring the sister Clarice, who shortly appeared, wearing that mild but steadfast expression of countenance which had always seemed to me to be so remarkable a characteristic of this suffering young creature.

There was a dead silence at that instant in the hall—the superieure visibly trembled, and the father was equally agitated, for his lip quivered, and his complexion became more intensely cadaverous.

Clarice had entered, and was advancing to the table,

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probably mistaking her orders, which were that she should immediately attend the superieure; but being commanded to stand in the centre of the room, the father suddenly showered upon her a quantity of water from the bentier, at the same instant sucking in his breath, and emitting it towards her with a sort of convulsive effort, followed by a loud and discordant charge to the demon supposed to dwell within her to come out from her, in the names of the Holy Cross, the Mother of Mercy, and all the saints dwelling in paradise.

It was natural for Clarice to start when thus suddenly assailed with the shower dashed in her face, the vehement gestures of the father, and the tremendous voice which reverberated from the very walls of the apartment: and no doubt this was a result expected and desired, and good care was taken that this natural motion should not pass unobserved, for he failed not to point it out as an evidence of the strong influence of the demon who presided within the breast of the afflicted person. There was much holding-up of hands and elevating of eyes among the seniors on this occasion, with sundry grimaces and contortions; these were suddenly interrupted by a call to prayer, which was instantly obeyed, every person present, with the exception of Clarice, kneeling down in the place where she stood, and the eyes of all being fixed upon the father, or turned towards our unhappy sister, who stood during the whole time with her arms crossed over her breast, and her eyes fixed upon the pavement. Neither did she start again when fresh showers of water were thrown upon her from the bentier.

And now followed various loud and vehement prayers and invocations on the part of Father Joachim, with sundry forms and ceremonies, consisting of crossings, and salutations, and kneelings, and risings, and bowings, and sprinklings, which succeeded each other in rapid succession, until the principal performer in this piece of jugglery, for I can call it nothing else, was glad to pause for a moment to gather breath, and wipe the perspiration which oozed from his brow. During this pause, the superieure admonished us by a sign to rise from our kneeling attitude, which being done, we all stood for a while, the confessor seeming to be busy during the interval with the cross which had been placed upon the table, sometimes taking it up and pressing his

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lips upon it, and again setting it down and mumbling a prayer before it. At length he turned to the superieure, and said, "Daughter, you are my witness before the tribunal of the Almighty, how I have wrestled and contended in prayer, according to that which is prescribed in cases of this kind,* by the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, of which Jesus Christ is the invisible, and of which the pope is the visible head, and without the pale of which no soul can be saved. And now, until this moment, I have been utterly foiled and baffled, through the prevalence of the evil one over the heart of this our miserable daughter; and yet, lest any one here present should still be misbelieving, I am willing to put the matter to a test which to every candid mind must be incontrovertible. The holy Scriptures admonish us to try the spirits; and this is the trial which I propose:—let every one here present approach this table, according to seniority, and dip her fingers into this holy vessel, and press her lips in meek adoration upon this sacred symbol. If the afflicted sister can endure this test, my daughter," he added, still addressing the abbess, "we may trust that our prayers have prevailed, and that the Mother of Mercy is ready once more to receive her lost one to her divine bosom."

The superieure signified her assent to this proposal by descending from her dais, and being the first to submit to the test; then followed the seniors, and afterward, one by one, all the sisters of every degree; and when we had all gone through the ceremony, we looked anxiously at Clarice, who still stood where she had done from the first.

"Daughter," said the priest, "come forward; we invite you to return from the way of death into that of life—from the dominion of Satan to a strict reunion with him who was your first love, your espoused husband and Redeemer—to the arms of your spiritual mother, to the society of your weeping sisters, and to all you once held dear. We invite you to turn from sorrow, and wo, and death, and hell, to joy, and peace, and the hopes of Paradise." And while he thus spoke, all our eyes were fixed, with an intenseness of solemn

* Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites.

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interest, which I cannot describe, on the still figure of the unhappy Clarice.

The priest, in the mean time, seemed to have exhausted his rhetoric (hypocrite as he was, I thought better of him then, and gave him credit for all the earnestness he expressed), and looked at the abbess as if to inquire what was next to be done, but she was silent; while something like a slight convulsion agitated the features of Annunciata.

"Must I pronounce the Anathema Maranatha of the church?" at length thundered the priest.

"No, no, no," exclaimed Pauline; "no, no, no, my father; yet wait a moment;" and she sprang forward, drawing me with her, and down we both fell upon our knees before him, saying, "Oh! spare her; spare her yet a little moment; spare spare, the unhappy one—only one little moment; let us pray again; who knows but that there may be mercy yet in store for her?"

Many were affected at this scene, and the unhappy offender so much so that she visibly wept.

It was the part of the superieure to act the compassionate on that occasion. I did not understand her then, and God forgive me if I think worse of her now than she deserves,—but certain it is, that she promoted the cause pleaded by Pauline; and in consequence, Father Joachim again proceeded to utter his thundering oraisons, till the arched roof rung again with the overpowering noise; then raising from his knees, all bathed in perspiration, he affected to have thought of a last expedient, and taking up the symbol again, he approached Clarice, and tendering it to her with sundry earnest pleadings, he so contrived the matter as to permit it to drop as if from her hand, and to fall at her feet, where, by its own force and weight upon the pavement, it broke in pieces.

I shall not easily forget the impression produced by the crash of the fractured cross, nor the horror expressed by the greater proportion of the sisters, many of whom were then as ready to cry Anathema Maranatha as the father had before been. Neither did he now spare her, but after having pronounced the dreadful words by which poor Clarice was declared to be an object of eternal damnation, he commanded that the sacrilegious person should be kept in close confinement

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until the pleasure of the high ecclesiastical author[illegible] respecting her should be ascertained.

La Mère Ursule, as no doubt known to be the fittest for the purpose, was then directed to lead her away, and we, the rest of the household, were immediately summoned to vespers. This was the moment of the triumph of the evil one over that lily of the Lord's planting, and of the exultation of those of the family who had long secretly envied and hated her. Many eyes which had beheld her that evening, saw her no more after that hour; neither shall they see her again till the period shall arrive when "the secrets of all hearts shall be opened," and it shall be said, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The scene which I have described above seemed to fill every mind, even after it had taken place, with nameless apprehensions; all the terrors of superstition seemed as it were to be let loose upon us. Clarice had disappeared from that evening, and had she still been permitted to mingle with us, we no doubt should have fled from her as from a person infected with the pestilence. One heart only seemed to bleed for her, and one eye only attempted to penetrate the shade into which she had been withdrawn; and I am ashamed to say that that heart and that eye appertained not to me; on the contrary, what I considered at that time the daring impiety of the unhappy nun, had so entirely filled my mind with horror, that I did not attempt to reason upon the subject, or to admit the possibility that the poor young creature might have been unfairly dealt by. But will my reader long remain in doubt that it was my own affectionate Pauline, my comparatively enlightened Pauline, who, of all the household, was the only one who pitied poor Clarice; and it is with shame I confess that when she ventured to hint that all might not have been as it appeared to be as it regarded the fall of the symbol, I rejected the suggestion with a feeling of horror, such as I should have had in holding communion with a person convicted of the grossest and most abominable impiety; but although I rejected these suggestions at that time, yet I was far from betraying my friend. She was assured of my fidelity, and under this assurance she continually poured her apprehensions into my ears; and in thus doing not only gradually succeeded in shaking my

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prejudices, but in confirming her own opinions, arriving at length at the perfect conviction that we were altogether under a deception respecting Clarice, and that that which was behind was totally different from that which was apparent; but this was a gradual work even with my friend, and with me it was still slower.

In the mean time the first horror which had been excited by the scene just described, in which the Anathema Maranatha had been pronounced on our poor sister, was becoming less and less vivid, and something like the old dull uniformity of our lives was beginning to banish from remembrance the scenes which had lately passed, when one night one of the sisters, returning from nocturns, and passing along the gallery, the door of her cell being near the eastern window which overlooked the burying-ground, saw a white figure, as she thought, standing at the foot of the marble cross in the centre of the graves. She at first imagined that her eyes had deceived her; but she looked again, and then, as she solemnly declared, she saw the figure flit over the graves,—but not as if using the means of motion of any earthly creature,—and thus pass away, its drapery floating behind like a cloud or vapour; the unearthly whiteness of the whole figure showing conspicuously amid the shades, which were deep, on account of the height of the buildings with which the court was surrounded.

It was one of the dullest and most slow-minded of the sisters to whom this adventure occurred; but she was neither dull nor slow in imparting her terrors to the rest of the family. Her shrieks presently called us all into the gallery, and there the superieure made her profit of the adventure, and declared her opinion,—blaming herself severely for not having proposed the measure before,—that it would be necessary and expedient to appoint a solemn day of fasting and penitence, in order, as she said, to expiate the grievous offence which had been committed in the house, by the casting down and trampling under foot of the divine symbol; "For till that is done," she added, "how can we expect that our once holy house will be freed from the influence of malign spirits and demons of hell; or that our Lady of Misericorde will smile again on her devoted children?"

Thus speaking, she took the arm of la mère assistante and moved away, having previously commanded us to

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withdraw separately to our cells, in order, no doubt that being alone, we might have the more leisure to meditate upon our agreeable situations, such as our own ignorance and superstition might depict them to us; for it was a part of our creed that evil spirits had much power on earth; and it was far from agreeable to us to suppose that because of the offence of Clarice, the malign beings were entirely at liberty to work their will with us in any way they pleased, until some means could be found of effectually propitiating those higher powers whom we had unwittingly offended.

CHAPTER V.

THE BISHOP'S VISIT.

We were informed the next day that our bishop was on his way to St. Siffren, being on a journey through his diocess; and it was then arranged that we should require his presence to exorcise the house, and to assist at a solemn ceremony which was fixed for the day on which he was expected. There was a great fervour and bustle of preparation for this ceremony, and it was then that I first saw those parts of the building which lay below the level of the ground, and which, in old convents and churches, are frequently as extensive, and far more intricate than those above the earth. This fact may perhaps afford much matter for consideration. Why were these dark chambers prepared, unless they were intended for concealing transactions which would not bear the light?—and again, how were they constructed so as to be secret to the workmen in general? To the last of these inquiries I have somewhere read a satisfactory answer, namely, that the mysterious orders of freemasons had their origin from the necessity of providing these secret chambers in fortresses and religious houses (a necessity which arose from the state of society in the dark ages), which secret refuges, no doubt, administered largely, through the depravity of man, to the purposes of hidden barbarities. But be this as it may, there is no doubt that the chambers in the

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foundation of our house were very extensive. The principal descent into them (for there were several secret stairs into different parts of these vaults) was by a narrow pointed door, embossed with iron, and covered again with one in carved wood resembling the common doors of the house. This entrance to the secret chambers opened from the upper gallery. Within the door was a narrow staircase, which, after sundry turnings and windings, arrived at a circular chamber on a level with the ground floor; whence another staircase descended to the subterraneous apartments. At the foot of these last stairs was a large stone hall, or rather, I should say, chapel, furnished with benches, and having, at the farther end, a beautiful screen of Carrara marble, of a perfect and brilliant white, so arranged as to permit that which was behind it to be distinctly seen by any one sitting before it. Within the screen was the private chapel and altar of Notre Dame de la Misericorde, with certain precious relics and votive offerings of immense cost. This little sanctuary was splendid in the extreme, being all of that brilliant yellow marble called le Brocadel d'Espagne. The roof of the chapel arose in the form of a dome, and was lined with glass mosaic, representing Him of whom no effigy should be made. When the chapel was lighted up, the brilliancy of this mosaic was almost inconceivable. The altar of the chapel was of lapis lazuli, with cornices of gold, having a splendid figure of the Virgin above it, and at her feet an image of our patroness, in the habit of the order, kneeling, and presenting a burning heart to the object which she was supposed to be in the act of worshipping. On the heart was engraved this motto in Latin—*Given for thee.* We, the uninitiated, were, however, only permitted to see this splendid sanctuary through the screen. We were employed to make artificial flowers for adorning the altar; also in finishing a stool, which was to be an offering to the bishop. But I was describing the inner chambers, those dark and doleful regions which never saw the fair light of day; there was more than one door which opened into the outer chapel—high-pointed, narrow, ominous-looking doors—and there was a long passage, apparently parallel with the gallery above, which ran a long way, from one corner of the small vestibule into which the lower flight of stairs descended.

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Having been employed to carry some flowers down to the sacristine the day before the bishop was expected, Pauline and I contrived to escape observation in order to explore this long, under-ground passage. It was arched, and the walls were shining with damp and slime; there were many doors which opened into it, but all were fast, and apparently had not been opened for years, but we observed several narrow winding stairs which came down into the passage, and from one of these we gathered up a very small fragment of black serge, bearing the marks of having been torn from a larger piece, as if by a foot set on it. Pauline took it up; it was a portion of a nun's veil; she looked at me: it seemed as it were a warning to us not to pry too closely into the mysteries of the place, and we hastened back with beating hearts into the usual haunts of the sisters. But, being in a place where we could not be overheard, Pauline said, "You have hitherto, Angelique, lent a deaf ear when I have suggested my fears that poor Clarice has been unfairly dealt by; will you hear me now, when I say that I have my fears that they are dealing barbarously with her? Where is she now? where have they confined her? what has she done to incur their hatred? Oh! Angelique, Angelique, what would I give only for one moment's conversation with that unhappy creature. This, I doubt not, is a fragment of her veil; by what violence was it torn from her? In what dark chamber is she confined? to what extremities will they go with her? I have heard of offending nuns being bricked up alive in their tombs; and I know that Rome is not so far off but that an offender might be conveyed to the Inquisition there, with little fear of detection."

"Peace," I said, shuddering; "speak not of such horrors: but if Clarice were a blasphemer?"

"If," returned Pauline, "if she be a something else! what then? will tortures reclaim her?"

"You speak enigmas—what do you mean?" I asked.

"Nothing," she replied; "but, Angelique, at any rate she is an object of pity. In very deed and truth, I feel assured that Father Joachim had more part in throwing down the sacred symbol than poor Clarice."

"Mother of Mercy!" I exclaimed, "do you think so?"

She placed her hands on my lips, and then suddenly exclaimed, "I tell you that they ought to be pea-green;

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and if you assert the contrary, I shall say that you have walked with your eyes shut ever since you were born; and I refer the question to Sister Annunciata"—thus giving me notice who was behind me. "Are not the leaves of the olive-tree delicate pea-green?" she added, "for Angelique will have it that they have a peculiar tinge of their own."

This appeal to Annunciata caused me to turn quickly round. I however as quickly took up Pauline's cue, and, for once, I think that we succeeded in baffling Annunciata, and making her believe that we were thus vehemently discussing the colour of a leaf.

The next day was a fast indeed, and we were not permitted to taste a morsel till noon. At that hour we had a dinner of pulse, and we were to fast again till after the ceremony, which was to take place at the going down of the sun. At sunset, the subterranean chapel was lighted up, the bishop was introduced into it, with his principal suffragan and Father Joachim, and we were all paraded into the outer chapel, singing one of our most solemn chants. It would be but a fatiguing repetition to describe more of our ceremonies; there are a sameness and heartlessness in them which none can feel more entirely than those who think it their duty to take a part in them. The place, beneath the earth, was the only circumstance which rendered this form materially different from every other which had gone before. But what Pauline had suggested by the apprehended sufferings of Clarice weighed heavily on my heart; and when the bishop addressed us, and told us that the dreadful offence of which the apostate sister had been guilty, in throwing down the cross, and as it were trampling it under her feet, would assuredly bring destruction on the whole house, and fiery torments for myriads of ages on every individual of the family, who did not, by prayer and fasting, deliver herself from a participation in the horrible guilt,—so strong a feeling of doubt of his veracity, and so lively a suspicion of his sincerity arose within my breast, that I could even then, had I dared, have torn the veil from my head, and rushed back into the world, at the risk of incurring even a severer punishment in the life to come than that with which he threatened me. In short, I had begun to doubt of the truth of my spiritual guides, and to see

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things in a new light, though, as yet, darkly and indistinctly.

When the ceremony was concluded, we were all led out of the subterranean chapel, and taken to a slight repast in the refectory, after which we were dismissed, as supposed, to our beds. But I had not yet undressed, when a low signal, given at my door, roused me again, and, on opening it, I saw Pauline.

She gave me another signal, and walked on before me, stepping softly, to the farther end of the gallery. She stopped before the entrance of the subterranean chambers; the carved door had been fastened back ever since the preparations for the ceremony had commenced, and the inner door, namely, that embossed with iron, was ajar, though nearly closed. Pauline informed me that she had seen the sister Annunciata go in but a moment before, and had heard her slip a bolt within, not ascertaining, in her haste, that it had not entered the catch, of which she, Pauline, had been immediately made aware by a sudden blast, which had caused the rusty hinges of the inner door to creak; and then, having pointed this out to me, she put the startling question, "Are you willing to follow Annunciata, and see what she is about? Now is our moment to find out what they are doing with poor Clarice; and if they detect us, let us say, that, finding the door open, we had resolved to spend the night in prayer before our Lady of Misericorde."

I shall not trouble my reader with enumerating all the objections I made to this daring act. Suffice it to say, that the more courageous spirit of Pauline overruled them all, and that I accompanied her down the stairs, which, as I before said, were a double flight, the first only reaching to a level with the ground-floor of the house, and the second to the subterranean chambers. We had scarcely got to the foot of the second flight, when the lights from the gorgeous sanctuary described above burst upon our view. Still there was darkness without the screen, sufficient to render our figures obscure. Hearing voices beyond this screen, we crept round the outer chapel, and fixed ourselves in an obscure niche, where we could see all within the sanctuary, and hear also every word which was spoken.

I have often wondered, upon reflection, how it was possible for two young women, such as we were, to

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dare so far as we then did; but we were urged by a vehement feeling of anxiety respecting the fate of Clarice, which we had little doubt would be revealed in this secret council. The parties within the screen were the bishop, who was seated on the left hand of the altar, and who remained in an attitude of deep thought; the father Joachim; the bishop's immediate attendant and confidant, a member of the society of Jesus; the lady abbess; la Mère Ursule; and Annunciata. The bishop spoke first: "The affair is weighty," he said, "and I ought to have been told this when last in this place."

"We had hopes," replied madame, "that she would give way. We were unwilling to fly to extremities."

"When a limb is infected with gangrene, my daughter," replied the bishop, "no ideas of false compassion should prevent us from cutting it off. You have indulged your own feelings at the expense of our holy mother the church—you have sinned grievously. But let the offender be called: I will speak to her myself." And he seemed to relapse again into thought.

At a motion of the superieure, Annunciata and la Mère Ursule left the chapel; we missed them, indeed, the next moment, but we saw not by which way they went out, nor did we hear a door shut or open at the moment of their disappearance. The follower of the bishop had begun to speak. I learned his history some time afterward. He was a Jesuit from Livorno, and the confessor of the household of the bishop. He was also said to hold an office in the inquisition at Rome, and was a man of an awful aspect, though his features were remarkably fine, his brow calm and lofty, and his voice deep and remarkably clear and melodious. I shall call him the Inquisitor, his name not having been known to me at that time. It seems that the bishop had referred to him for his opinion, probably by some silent motion, for I did not hear him speak. The answer was, "I should have advised a removal to Rome, where the matter could be speedily settled, were there not some fear of a rescue, if she should find means of holding converse with any person whatever in the towns through which we must pass;—the popular feeling is now so much against all compulsory methods. The thing, therefore, must, if possible, be settled here." And he added something about the French, which we did not quite understand, and then resumed in a louder tone, "It will be safer to

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deal with her here, if possible. The question might be applied safely in this place. These walls are thick!" and he looked round him with a searching glance, which made Pauline and myself shrink more closely into the shade of our corner.

"I have reproved my daughter, indeed, for being too lenient," remarked the bishop, "but much as I abhor the crime of this our apostate child, I would not as yet choose to go to extremities. Let us try milder means first. Solitary confinement and a diet of the most meager description have overcome more obstinate cases than this has yet appeared to be; and you know an instance, daughter," he added, addressing the abbess, "in which an individual has been gathered back again into the bosom of the church after thirty years' resistance, and if such a one is recovered only to die in the true faith—though never again to be restored to the light of day—it ought to be a subject of rejoicing. There are few minds which can stand years of solitary confinement."

Oh, my God! I inwardly exclaimed, what horrors are these which unfold themselves: who can say but that some miserable wretch is now confined in these dungeons of whom we have no suspicion. He speaks of thirty years—thirty years of solitary confinement!—But the Jesuit was speaking again;—

"It is not for me to dictate to my lord," he said, "but the defenders of the church should not suffer souls to be lost because their more tender feelings bid them to shrink from blood. The times, I allow, are perilous, and infidelity is stalking abroad upon the earth. What we do must be done with discretion; and all means are lawful which promote the honour and safety of our holy mother church. Pardon my zeal if it sometimes flames too hotly; but God be praised, there is a hell, where all who despise the church on earth will be taught to know that her authority is not to be defied but at the peril of damnation."

While uttering this last dreadful and astounding word, one of the upright and gilded panels of the wall opened, and the lovely Clarice, all pale as marble itself, and habited as a sister, though without her cross or rosary, stood in the door-way. "Advance," said the bishop; and the next minute she moved into the centre of the chapel, Annunciata and la Mère Ursule placing themselves

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behind her. For an instant not one word was spoken. The silence was awful, and the eye of each of her angry judges fell under the calm and steadfast expression of their victim. At length the bishop spoke, at first mildly, but gathering heat as he proceeded, "Is this true which they allege against you, daughter," he said, "namely, that you, having taken the sacred and solemn vows which ought to bind you eternally to a heavenly spouse, having farther bound yourself to chastity, poverty, and a holy life, have wickedly and impiously renounced your obedience to the church, and professed those tenets which are justly held in abhorrence by every individual who is not prepared as fuel for the fires of hell!" The bishop here ceased to speak, as if afraid of being betrayed into some excess of passion; and Father Joachim, in his turn, addressed our unhappy sister, saying, "It is requested of you, daughter, here, in this sacred place and sacred presence, to give a full and true account of the damnable errors which you, through the suggestion of the devil, have for some months past nourished in your bosom, in obstinate defiance of all your spiritual rulers and governors, and to the certain subjection of your own soul and body to the flames of hell through all eternity."

To these exordiums Clarice made no reply, though she somewhat changed her attitude, looking down upon the pavement, and folding her arms; on which the father again urged her to answer, descending to the most vehement and offensive language, and proceeding so far in this strain, that the bishop thought it right to interfere.

"Leave me, my brother," he said, "to deal with this unhappy young woman; you do but harden her, apparently, by your severity. You do not permit her to perceive that it is love, pure and ardent love of her immortal soul, which has led us to assemble here, to confer together respecting the best means of reclaiming her, and bringing her back to the bosom of her spiritual mother—that mother of whom she was, at one time, the chosen and the beloved—that mother who invited her to become the spouse of her Son, to the rejection of all inferior objects of affection, and who now extends her arms and invites her to return, and to be to her as she was at the first, one of the purest, and one of the holiest of her daughters."

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Such was the substance of the address of the venerable prelate to Clarice; and it was delivered with such a pathos of earnestness as might be expected from one of the finest orators of which the church could boast at that period, and from a learned and polished gentleman, for the bishop was a son of the noble family of Colonna, and had received the first education which the Roman Catholic church affords:—and, undoubtedly, his eloquence seemed deeply to affect Clarice, for she wept and sobbed, and half kneeling before the venerable prelate, and clasping her hands, with beautiful earnestness she said, "Oh! my father! my honoured and respected father! would to God that it were in my power to do all that you require of me; but you demand of me that which I dare not grant. You have been informed that I am a heretic, and I confess to you that I am constrained (by a power greater than my own, and one I cannot resist) to reject all objects of faith which are not revealed in Holy Scripture."

I felt Pauline, as she stood by me, start and tremble as Clarice uttered these words; nor can I describe the sensation of sudden and overpowering light which, at the same moment, shot across my mind.

Father Joachim and the Jesuit were about to speak, but the bishop motioned to them to be silent, while he put this question, "You speak of the Holy Scriptures, daughter; by what means have you obtained a sight of them?"

"The infernal spirit must have helped her," exclaimed Father Joachim, "if she has got them in this house."

"Allow her to speak for herself, my reverend brother," replied the bishop, repeating the question to Clarice.

"I read them as a child," she replied; "my nurse was a Protestant."

"Rather say, an accursed heritic," muttered the father.

"And she taught you to read the Holy Scriptures," remarked the bishop.

Clarice replied, that she had so done; on which the Jesuit, in a softened tone and tempered manner, insinuated the following query:—"Granting your statement to be correct, my daughter, do you mean us to infer that what you learned of your nurse in infancy has been the means of affecting that change in your principles, which, as you have acknowledged to my brother

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Joachim, took place only within the last few months? Has no other circumstance contributed to this change?"

"Let the truth be spoken," said the bishop; "it cannot now alter your case. Be assured that the utmost mercy will be shown to you which your unhappy circumstances will allow. I ask you, what was the immediate cause of the change in your sentiments?"

"The reading of the divine Word, my father," replied Clarice, with firmness; "God forbid that I should attempt to conceal the blessed means which have rendered my life, even in this dungeon, more bright and blessed than all that the world could have given while destitute of that peace of mind which has been bestowed on me through the reading of Scripture." The bishop would have interrupted her, but she went on as if not heeding him. "Before I was blessed with a sight of that holy Word, I was in bondage to the fear of death; I could not see my salvation secure in the Redeemer; I was fettered by innumerable forms, and overwhelmed with the terror of some failure in duties which were too heavy for me to bear: but now, having been enabled to see my completeness in my Redeemer, I can look forward to death as to the entrance into a state of blessedness, which can cease only when one greater than God shall arise to tear me from his arms."

"Blasphemy!" exclaimed the father Joachim; while the Jesuit bit his lip, and the pale face of the venerable bishop was flushed to the brow. The prelate, however, commanded himself, and said, "You have not yet satisfied me respecting the immediate cause of your change of mind; how did you obtain a copy of the holy Scriptures in this house?" "Speak," cried the father, grinding his teeth; "and tell us what devil helped you." He was again checked by the bishop, though with commendation of his zeal.

Clarice then spoke, alleging that she had no wish to deceive or to hide the truth; and she confessed, that when employed by the superieure to attend Madame Barthelemis in her sickness, she had obtained the sight of a small Bible, which Bible had been sent to that lady when in the convent, with an entreaty that she would read it before she made up her mind to take the vows.

The superieure was visibly agitated as Clarice proceeded, and she had cause to be so, for the bishop reproved her for having entrusted one of her daughters

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with a person with whose character she was not acquainted. The abbess acknowledged her error, and endeavoured to throw some of the blame on la Mère Ursule, who had been, it seems, especially directed to watch this lady. The bishop, however, having charged them both to be more cautious in future, adding, that he would speak farther to them on this subject in private,—recurred to his examination of Clarice, asking her, "Wherefore the reading of the holy Scripture should have turned her mind from that only true form of worship which is built thereon?" "Or as the schoolmen would say," added the Jesuit, "how has it happened that error should have arisen from the comparison and consideration of two subjects established on the principles of eternal verity; for whereas the Scriptures are the word of truth, so also the Catholic church (also called Roman, because Rome is the seat of its earthly representative, and apostolic because it derives its ministry from the apostles in a regular and unbroken succession) is an uncontaminated source of truth, being incapable of error, since it is regulated and animated by the spirit of truth. I ask, then, daughter, how has it been possible for you to derive the spirit of heresy from the comparison of truth with truth?"

Clarice made no reply, and the bishop said, "Are you not aware, daughter, that ours is the only true church on earth, being the only church which has the qualities especially appertaining to a true church.* And these qualities are, in the first instance, unity of faith and a single head; in the second, universality and perpetuity; and in the third, holiness; and it is also an established fact, that there is only the Catholic church, commonly called Roman, which possesses these qualities; whence it follows that all other churches are but the synagogues of Satan." And the venerable prelate looked earnestly at Clarice as demanding her confutation of these assertions; he was, however, obliged to urge her again to speak before she would answer. She then spoke in a clear calm tone, and with a sweetness of voice and emphasis, and a readiness of speech, which could not fail of filling my mind with astonishment,—not understanding at that time the nature of that assistance which our blessed Saviour imparts on needful occasions to his

* Catechisme Theologique of the Jesuits.

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own children, thus enabling such to bear the testimony, that He who is with them is greater than he who is against them. "I am already, I see," said Clarice, "in that perilous situation in which I can look only for help from the powers which are above, without the intervention of human agency;" and clasping her hands, she stood for an instant, with her eyes raised up, while her lips seemed to move in silent prayer. Then, as it were, having received strength according to the promise,—"And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say,"—she expressed herself much to the following effect:—"There is," she said, "in the private chapel of madame the superieure (to whom I desire to pay all honour and consideration as to a respected elder), a figure of the Virgin Mary, trampling the serpent under her feet. This same figure has a crown of twelve stars on her head; and there is a motto on the pedestal to this effect, '*Ipsa conteret caput tuum.*'"*

The father Joachim would have interrupted her in this place, and I heard the muttered words, "Accursed heresy;" but he was again restrained by the bishop, and was wholly unobserved by Clarice. "I was taught," she continued, "that this image represented the mother of our Lord in the first instance, and that it was also an emblem of the same person as representative of the universal church, the mother of the body of Christ, of which every believer is a member; and I was thus led

* "She shall bruise thy head."—In the Cathedral church at Lyons is an image of the Virgin trampling on the head of a serpent, with this motto, "*Ipse conteret caput tuum,*" translated into French, "*Elle te brisera la tete.*" Whether the word *semence* or *race* is used in the French translation of the passage of which this motto forms a part, the relative will be feminine, and may therefore relate either to the woman or her seed; but not so in the Latin; if *semen* be implied, the relative must be neuter.

St. Paul, quoting Genesis xxvi. 4, says, "He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed which is Jesus Christ."

The Greek word used is σπερμα, and is translated into French by the word *race*. This is the word also used in the text of Genesis iii.

And so we find in Hebrew זֶרַע *zerang* is the word in Genesis iii. 26, and has the true meaning of seed, being derived from *zerang*, he sowed. So that St. Paul, in quoting Genesis xxvi., does in fact quote Genesis iii. It being one of the promises.

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so to confound the person of the holy Virgin with the attributes of the universal church, that I saw in this image the symbol of the church trampling under foot the evil one, and crushing to atoms the head of the arch enemy of mankind. My ideas, I confess, were confused on this subject; but such as they were, they tended to high notions of that form of worship to which I had bound myself, and to the confirmation of the persuasion that there is no salvation beyond the pale of the Roman Catholic church."

Father Joachim advanced a step towards her as she spoke these last words; but being hardly restrained by a look from the bishop, he drew back so far as to be close to us, where, as he stood, we could distinctly hear the labouring of his breath, as of a person under vehement agitation of mind, and the grinding or gnashing of his teeth. As to the Jesuit, and the rest of the persons within the sanctuary, they stood mute and fixed as statutes, with the exception of the prelate, who was with much blandness of manner, and, as has since appeared to me, insidiously, drawing on the devoted sister to say all that was in her mind.

"Proceed, my daughter," he said, "and let us know what this image of our Lady has to do with the alteration of your principles."

"I have said, my father," continued Clarice, "that I had entertained the notion, together with all the sincere members of the Romish faith, that there is no salvation reserved for the sinner beyond the pale of the Roman Catholic church; and, as I before remarked, I had confounded the real person of the Virgin with the symbolical idea of the church—confusing the maternal character of the mother of the man Christ Jesus with the emblematical character of the spiritual mother of the body of Christians, of which the Lord is the head."

"Proceed," said the bishop. And the Jesuit changed his attitude, and bent forward his head in deep attention.

"It was on this subject," continued Clarice, "that the first light shone upon my mind, from the reading of that Bible which I found in the possession of Madame Barthelemis. There is a reference to the third of Genesis, at the end of the motto to which I have alluded, and when, in the course of my reading, I came to this passage, I was struck—Pardon me, my lord, I would not willingly offend—with the error in the quotation;

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for I saw at once that it was not the woman that was to bruise the serpent's head, but the seed of the woman, even God manifested in the flesh. But, at the same time, I was convinced that a woman is the emblem selected by Scripture to represent a church, her peculiar graces as a mother and wife being designed to exhibit a faithful and loyal church; and her infidelities and wanderings from the way of honour, to show forth an idolatrous and impious polity. And having this clew, I followed the emblem through the whole of Scripture, and became persuaded—God the Spirit, I trust, being my guide—that those are in error who, in this period of time, apply the promises, which rightly appertain to the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven, to any establishment on earth; or attribute that perfectibility and purity to any human head or representative of the Redeemer, which are due only to Christ our Lord. For Christ," she continued, with beautiful earnestness, "is the Husband of the Church, the only Head of the Christian body; and the hour is not come in which the Bride will be made manifest in her derived, and therefore complete, beauty, in the presence of her Beloved. She possesses at present no glory which we can see on earth; her children are scattered, there is no b auty in them which we should desire, they are as frightened sheep: neither can they be gathered together until He who is their Head shall manifest himself unto them, when he shall appear again in his glory in the latter days.

"Thus I was brought to distinguish between that invisible church which is our spiritual mother, namely, the Jerusalem which is above, and those visible forms on earth which at best are imperfect, and to whom it is blasphemy to assign those attributes which belong to God alone. And having obtained these views through the leadings of the Lord the Spirit; and having, as it were, been brought to see the error into which we have all fallen, in placing the foundation below, for that church whose place is above,—it followed, of course, that all I had been taught to respect, as being built upon that false foundation, fell to the ground, and I became, what you now see me, incapable of admitting any other rule of life or doctrine than that which may be derived from the words of Scripture."

Clarice here ceased to speak, and the bishop, looking

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at the Jesuit, said a few words in Latin, which I did not comprehend; on which the latter, speaking in a mild, insinuating tone to Clarice, requested a farther explanation of what she had just stated.

"Would to God," replied the lovely nun, "that he would vouchsafe that same bright gleam of heavenly light to you, my reverend father, which he has, in his sovereign mercy, bestowed upon my once benighted understanding! that he would remove that delusion from your heart, by which you have been led to expect the fulfilment of those promises under the present dispensation, which belong only to the period of the triumphant reign of our Lord on earth, and to the church which is above. For," continued she, "we now dwell under a dispensation in which the glorious state of the church is discovered only by faith, and enjoyed only through the assurance of hope: and in which the visible church, being ruled and conducted by frail and sinful mortals, can never enjoy that perfection and purity which are promised to that which is invisible, and which will hereafter be exhibited in all that glorious beauty which she will derive from her union with her heavenly Bridegroom."

Such, as nearly as I can recollect, was the answer made by Clarice to the Jesuit; and although what she said was inexplicable to me at the time, it was understood by him, and also comprehended in some degree by Pauline, as appeared by several conversations which she afterward held with me upon the subject. Clarice had, however, ceased to speak for some seconds, before any one replied; at length the Jesuit answered and said, "My dear sister, I take in your reasonings, and I comprehend where their fallacy lies; and, permit me to say, that through all my experience I have never yet encountered a more subtle stratagem of the arch-enemy than this which he has wrought in you. See you not that the error into which he has led you not only tends to subvert the holy Roman Catholic Apostolic Church, but to destroy the pretensions of every church on earth?"

"Of every visible church on earth," replied Clarice, "which assumes the prerogatives of that which is invisible, and asserts an infallibility which belongs to God alone."

It seemed that these last words of the sister were more than the constrained moderation of those who were present could support. There was a general burst

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of indignation poured upon her from every side. Accursed heretic and blasphemer, diabolical influences, fire and damnation, were among the mildest terms which fell from some of their lips; till at length the voice of the prelate prevailing, after the rest had in some measure spent their fury, was heard to the following effect, while he raised his eyes and hands in an attitude of prayer, having arisen from his seat, and turned to the image above the altar, "Oh! sovereign lady, star of the sea!" he exclaimed: "thou, to whom the three sacred persons of the Holy Trinity gave the name; thou, to whom all in heaven and earth, and under the earth do bow; thou, from the invocation of whose name more grace and mercy proceed than from the name of thy adorable Son; the sovereign mediatrix with God; the holy mother of God; universal queen and immaculate; above all angels; alone inferior to God—have mercy on this thine household, and cleanse it from the sin of having harboured beneath its roof a creature so utterly vile, fallen, apostate, accursed as this miserable heretic now standing before me."* Then falling on his knees, a motion in which he was imitated by all then present in the chapel, with the exception of Clarice, he began to pour out certain Latin prayers, with a vehemence which caused the hollow roofs and long vaulted passages to resound again; and was thus engaged, when the slamming of some heavy door above reverberated through the long passages, with a noise no doubt unusual in those silent haunts; the noise evidently startled the superieure, and we saw her turn to Annunciata, as if to ask her if she had fastened the door above. At the same instant Pauline pulled me by the sleeve; we felt that not a moment was to be lost. Annunciata, we thought, would not move to ascertain the cause of this noise till the prayer was concluded; and, painful as our anxiety was to know what would be the sentence passed on the unhappy Clarice, we dared not to delay another moment, but crept from the corner in which we were ensconced, and happily reached the gallery above a few minutes before the sisters came out of their cells for the nocturns: had we been a few moments later we certainly should have encountered some of them.

There was a huge iron bolt within the door which

* St. Anselm

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led from the gallery to the subterranean part of the house; and it is probable, as I hinted before, that when Annunciata went down to the private conference, she slipped the bolt without ascertaining that the door had first been properly closed, and thus missed the latch. These, indeed, appear to be small and unimportant matters, yet what great things sometimes hang on matters apparently light as air!

The necessity of suppressing the expression of feelings of the most painful and harassing nature, is one of the torments to which all such poor individuals are exposed as are subjected to any sort of life directly adverse to the natural feelings given by God to his creatures. True religion puts no violent force on the affections. When properly understood, if it enjoins some acts of self-denial, and condemns some exercises of the affections, as not agreeable to God, it offers objects as infinitely more worthy of those affections, as that which is eternal and incorruptible is more precious and desirable than that which is perishable and tainted with sin.

Oh! how heavily went the hours from the time in which we had witnessed the scene in the subterranean chapel, till Pauline and I could find a moment to converse with freedom. We had every reason to believe that our daring exploit had been unsuspected; but it was an effort greater than I could make to seem at ease. I had nothing for it but to complain of illness. A violent toothache, which I pretended (God forgive my various hypocrisies), accounted well for the tears I could not restrain, and gave me a pretext for muffling myself up in my veil, and hiding my swollen eyes. At length, however, Pauline found an opportunity to come to me in my cell, by the favour of the kind Mother Genefride; and then it was that we not only wept freely together, but concocted a daring measure to serve poor Clarice, if possible: for although we hardly understood our own feelings, and certainly did not acknowledge them to ourselves at that time, that which had passed in the conference in the subterranean chamber had shaken our confidence as to the pretensions of the Roman Catholic church; but we had no Bible to which to refer to resolve our doubts. The project we formed was this: we made a needle-book of card-board, and adorned it with a covering embroidered with beads, and we wrote on the card-board, within the covering, a note to Madame Verani, saying, we had given the letter to

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Clarice; that she had in some way displeased the superieure; and that she was not allowed to mix with the rest of the family, and was now, indeed, never seen by us;—leaving it to her to take what measures she thought best in this painful state of things.

I had seen Madame Verani once between the usual times appointed for the visits of friends, and I now expected to see her again in a few days. We therefore had to work hard to get our little case finished; and during those few days we had every reason to believe that Clarice was closely confined, and probably in some subterraneous dungeon.

The day at length came when the friends of the sisters were expected, and I was called down to Madame Verani. The abbess, as usual, was present, and Sister Annunciata too, speaking to some friends of her own without the grate. Madame Verani was much agitated, and full, I saw, of curiosity, but I was aware that Annunciata watched me closely, though seeming to be otherwise engaged. Tyranny and art, however, beget cunning, and I was determined to carry my point, which was to convey the little case to Madame Verani. I was in hopes that some one present would ask to see our work; but this not happening as I had hoped, I hinted to Madame Verani that I had been very busy in certain small matters with my needle, and wished much for a pattern of a purse from her. My friend was remarkably quick at a hint, and instantly begged me to show her some of my handiworks, hinting that she wished to purchase some trifles. I was then directed to fetch some specimens of our ingenuity, the other visiters expressing the same wish as my friend had done; and when I had brought them, I selected the needle-book, and putting my hand through the grate, pressed it into Madame Verani's hand with a squeeze, saying at the same time, "Examine the inside, where I have painted a heart laid open."

"What is that, Sister Angelique?" said Annunciata.

"A needle-book," I replied; "la Mère Genefride has prized it at six francs."

"Let me see it," said she.

Madame Verani laid down her six francs, and immediately said, with a smile, "No, no, I do not trust it out of my hands—it is a little jewel. Excuse me, fair sister, I must have it; it is my Cecile's work, and in her

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own sweet taste. And now," she said, "adieu, dear friends; may the blessings of the holy Mother of God descend upon you!"

Oh, how did I tremble! and how violently did my heart beat, while I was carrying on this manœuvre! Should the history of my cloistered life fall into the hands of parents, may they be admonished thereby to avoid that cold severity in which the young mind finds an excuse for artful conduct; and if it should fall into the hands of young people, let it be remembered by them, that a crooked policy, even under the most trying circumstances, always brings with it a thousand nameless terrors, which totally destroy all peace of mind.

Rejoiced as I was that my communication had thus successfully reached Madame Verani, yet I cannot describe the terror which I experienced during the whole of that day, and until we had ascertained the result of our contrivance. It was not, however, till some time afterward that I learned the facts, which, in order to avoid confusion, I shall relate in this place.

Madame Verani had no sooner got home than she opened the needle-book—cut the lining, and found what we had written, or rather traced, with our painting-brushes.

The town of St. Siffren was already in great commotion, not so much from the dread of the approach of the French armies as from the demoniac spirit which the lower classes were exhibiting. And my friend, taking advantage of some slight uproar which had taken place in the streets, came to the convent a few days after she had received the case, and demanded an interview with the superieure: which, being granted, she informed her that she had heard some threatenings against the convent, with a hint that if any unhappy sisters had fallen under the displeasure of the church, she might be forewarned to lose no time in restoring them to favour, and in so arranging her household, that should there be any inroad of the populace, no person should have a word to say against the mildness and tenderness of her government.

This was the tendency of Madame Verani's discourse, although her advice was not tendered in the plain downright style in which I have given it in this place, but insinuated in the gentlest manner, and with all that respect with which the superieure of a convent always

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expected to be addressed in the days of which I am speaking. I was not informed, of course, of this visit of my friend, but Pauline and I very soon discovered its effects, and felicitated ourselves upon it, in a degree proportionate to the risk we had run to bring these effects about.

One morning, during the hour set aside for work and domestic duties, as Pauline and I were passing along the gallery to our cells, we met the sister Clotilde, the very same who had seen and reported the strange appearance in the burying-ground; and she had her eyes and mouth open, as if she had actually come from beholding another prodigy as astonishing as that of a human being flying over a cemetière.

"Oh, Sister Angelique! Sister Pauline!" she said, "Madame sent me to her room just now, I declare to Saint Ursula I have forgotten what for, and there, in the little chamber over the porch, which faces the cimetière, who do you think is lodged but Sister Clarice. I saw la Mère Ursule go in to her, to take her her breakfast, and it was all the same as we have; and I heard her speak, and thank the mother, and I came behind the mother, and saw her with my own very eyes; and there she is; and so what they say is all false."

"What do they say," asked Pauline, at the same time giving my hand a squeeze which at any other time would have made me shriek.

"What do they say?" repeated Clotilde; "why, that she was chained up in a dungeon because of the evil spirit; being so furious that nobody could come near her. It was la Mère Aymée who told us that it was always done so with the possessed: and she says more —she says that she once her very self saw a sister so bad that they were forced to chain her to a stone pillar in a cell under the house. She was called Agnace," she said, "and it was as terrible to look at her as if she had been the foul fiend himself."

"How long ago was this?" asked Pauline, shuddering and looking at me.

"La Mère Aymée can't say," replied Clotilde, "and la Mère Ursule, who could say if she would, will not tell. She says it is all a dream of la Mère Aymée's, and she rated her well for talking of such things. She says the old sister has grown childish, and does not know what she talks about. But, Jesu Maria! now

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suppose the devil should take Sister Clarice again, and she should break loose: the Holy Mother preserve us! what would become of us all!"

She was interrupted in this place by la Mère Ursule, who, coming out of the superieure's apartments, inquired what was the matter.

"If Sister Clarice should break out again, now you have brought her up into that cell, mother, what would become of us all?" asked Clotilde.

"Brought her up again?" repeated the mother; "what do you mean?"

"Out of the dungeon," said Clotilde.

"The dungeon, you fool!" replied the mother; "why she has been where she now is ever since you saw her last—under the tender care of our excellent superieure."

Could Pauline's eyes have transfixed a heart, I would not have given much for the life of the hypocritical mother at that instant. However, the old nun was not easy under the eye-beam which was shot against her; addressing my friend, she said, "What do you mean to infer by that glance, daughter?—But I advise you to beware, and not meddle with matters in which you have no concern. In my younger days, a glance like that would have cost me at least a week's penance."

"Thank God!" said Pauline; and then stopped short

"For what?" asked the mother.

"For all his goodness," returned my friend.

"Amen!" repeated the mother, giving her at the same time a searching look. "But take care," she added, "there are more ears and eyes in this house than you may be aware of."

"Agnace!" muttered Pauline; but I dragged her away, and I think that the mother did not hear this last word.

Our minds were, however, greatly relieved respecting Clarice, by this communication of Clotilde. She had light, and air, and food, and we ourselves had little more. And not being perfectly assured that she did not merit some degree of displeasure, though we could not have endured the idea of her being treated with actual cruelty, we endeavoured to set our minds at rest respecting her, and to accommodate ourselves as well as we might to our situation, of which the monotony again appeared the greater and the more irksome, after the excitement occasioned by the late events.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE PESTILENCE.

But it was not ordained that things should long remain as they were with us. A storm was approaching, and the commencement of the troubles of our house was very remarkable.

La Mère Ursule had a great-niece, the only living descendant of an unfortunate sister. This little girl, called Ella Rosa, had lost her mother, who died at St. Siffren at her birth; and the father, being a reprobate person, and not forthcoming at the time, la Mère Ursule, with the approbation of the superieure, had adopted the baby, and placed her under the charge of a peasant whose cottage was somewhere near at hand among the hills. It was determined that this little one should be taken into the house, as soon as she could be taught to behave herself with that discretion necessary in such an establishment; and, young as she was, she was considered as a pretendante for the veil, and was hence brought, from time to time, and presented to the image of the Virgin in the chapel, and sprinkled with holy water. I saw her once, on one of these occasions: she was a sweet, pretty little laughing thing, then not two years old, and the peasant, who doted on her, had not yet weaned her. Poor little baby! how my heart ached for her when I thought of the long weary life for which she was destined.

But it was about the first of August, and the weather was particularly hot, when news was brought us that little Ella Rosa had died after a short illness, and that we must prepare to attend her obsequies, as she was to be buried in the cimetière of the convent, as a pretendante to the sisterhood.

"Poor little babe!" whispered Pauline. "I could almost say, Thank God! that she has been delivered from the miseries preparing for her. Sweet infant! she is now among the blessed."

Ella Rosa had, it seems, died in the night; and early

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in the morning the little corpse was brought to the convent, and placed on a bier in the centre of the chœur. Immediately after the matin service, Pauline and I stole into the chœur, to look at the innocent remains. The little form was extended on the open bier, which was covered with a white cloth. It was dressed in what is called the habit of a pretendante, which nearly resembled that which we wore; on the brow was a crown of odoriferous herbs; at the head of the corpse were six candles of wax, in silver candelabra; and at the feet of the babe a cross upon an escabeau, covered with a white napkin, a burning taper being on each side the cross.

Over the face of the infant was a white sheet of paper curiously cut. We lifted it up, and were startled to see how entirely changed were those sweet features, on the beauty of which the sisters used to descant so rapturously,—comparing them to some bright figure of a cherub, such as holy men and women have pretended to see, when favoured with some celestial vision. The eyes of the corpse were sunk, and a circle of black had settled round the mouth, while, notwithstanding the incense which had been purposely thrown about the church by the care of the sacristan, a heavy smell already proceeded from the body.

"This is scarcely natural," I said to Pauline, "this poor babe died only a few hours since, and the work of dissolution seems to be proceeding at a frightful rate."

"The weather is hot," replied Pauline, "and after all, dear sister, what signifies it how soon this work is finished: dust must return to dust; the soul, the immortal soul, is all we ought to care for."

We then knelt by the bier, and prayed earnestly, though in much ignorance, for the eternal welfare and deliverance from the fires of purgatory of the little pretendante, singing or chanting the following form of words, with many repetitions, thinking that we should be heard the more for our much speaking:—"Luccsumas domine, pro tua pietate miserere animæ filiæ tuæ, Ellæ Rosæ, et a contagiis mortalitatis exutum, in æternæ salvationis partim restitue per dominum nostrum," &c. The interment of the infant pretendante took place, according to the usual forms, at twelve o'clock. At the hour appointed, all the religieuses assembled in the avant-chœur, and proceeded in order to the place where the body was, namely the chœur, the order of procession

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being as follows:—the sister who carried the benitier, or vase of holy water, going first; then she who carried the cross coming next, and the remainder following with lighted tapers, the superieure bringing up the rear. Having arrived in presence of the body, the sister who carried the benitier placed herself at the foot of the bier, the one who carried the cross at the head, and the rest of the sisters on each side. All being thus arranged, the priest entered with his acolytes, bringing the censers and the benitier for the purpose of throwing the holy water on the bier. He then said or sang the anthem, "Sit nomeñ domini," which the singers took up; and after various ceremonies and prayers, and several anthems, the little body was raised on the bier and carried to the cimetière, the priest, at the same time, singing these words, "Juvenes et virgines, laudate dominum—laudate eum in excelsis." When the body had been committed to the dust, with various hymns and prayers, all in Latin, the priest cast holy water upon it, and incensed the body and the tomb; after which, the corpse was covered with earth, and we all returned to the chapel to conclude the service.

And here it was supposed, that, as we had done all which was required by the church for the little pretendante, every thing would return to its usual course, and be as it was before: but this was not to be; the obsequies of Ella Rosa were not so soon to be forgotten. La Mère Ursule would insist upon watching all night by the grave, and old Mère Aymée sa d that it was a meritorious act, and showed the sincere interest of the aunt in the everlasting welfare of the poor babe; and I well remember seeing the poor enthusiast, as I now consider her to be, extended on the ground by the grave, on the cold damp earth, as I passed to the officium nocturnum: but this was not enough; the next day she must needs fast till sunset, and one of the sisters, who visited her in her cell during the day, edified us all by informing us that she had found her kneeling before her coffin, which it seems she had provided for herself some years before. There was a crucifix fixed upon the top of it, for it stood on its beam-ends at the foot of her pallet, and various garnitures of bones and sculls; and, as I said above, she was kneeling before this gloomy object, repeating some hundreds of ave marias and paternos ters. Thus she spent her day; how she occupied her

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night I know not, but certain it is. that when she appeared at matins on the following morning, she looked almost as like a corpse as her poor niece had done. Young religieuses have as much pleasure in looking well in their way as other young persons, but there is an epoch in the life of a devotee in which a sunk and emaciated, and above all a cadaverous and unearthly appearance is thought particularly commendable. The appearance made by la Mère Ursule in the chœur, therefore, drew upon her much commendation, and acted as a stimulant to further painful privations; and when she did not appear at the noon-tide meal, or at supper, it was attributed to some surpassingly wonderful act of self-denial. But what was the end of all this? On the third morning after the death of her poor niece, she was found, not actually dead indeed, but dying in her bed, and almost too far gone for the last sacraments.

The extraordinary change which passed on her body immediately after death, together with the dreadful effluvia which it emitted, was the first circumstance which struck us as extraordinary; and then it was suggested, for the first time, among the assembled household, that several of the sisters had observed the same symptoms, though in a milder form, attending the corpse of the infant pretendante. Inquiries were then made respecting the cause of Ella Rosa's death, and it was found that she had been suddenly taken ill after having been carried to a house where a traveller had died of a fever; and more than this, it was discovered that several poor people were, at that time, actually lying ill with the same symptoms in the neighbourhood, besides one who had died during the night.

No one, who is not shut up as we were, can conceive the effect produced by this horrible discovery. There lay the tainted body, exhaling miasma from every pore; and who was to touch it? who was to move it? how were the forms necessary for the soul's benefit to be performed? The superieure had done well had she concealed the evil from us till the body had been buried, for there is nothing which promotes infection like excessive fear: but terror had excluded all idea of caution; and there we were, all collected in the passage, before the door of the cell where the body lay, wringing our hands, exclaiming, weeping, praying, kneeling, conjecturing; and instead of attributing the evil to a simple

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and natural cause, endeavouring to make out some supernatural explanation of the affliction which had fallen upon us. "Is it," said Pauline, "that we have been too severe on poor Clarice? Let us entreat madame to let her be set at large; we will promise not to associate with her."

This motion was approved of, and while we were considering how it should be opened to the superieure, who had withdrawn to consult Father Joachim, Sister Annunciata appeared at the head of the stairs, looking somewhat pale, but quite as calm as I had ever seen her. Pauline rushed towards her, and, in the name of the rest, begged to be permitted to speak to madame respecting the sufferings of the sister Clarice, "to which," said she, "we attribute this token of the Divine displeasure."

Annunciata was evidently discomposed on hearing this proposal, but recovered herself instantly, and asked Pauline what had induced her to suppose that Clarice had been severely treated.

"From the mystery and concealment which are always used in her affairs," replied my friend, fixing her eyes with an intent and searching gaze on Annunciata.

The latter endured the glance with unflinching steadfastness, and replied, "This is no business of mine, Sister Pauline; if you have any thing to say on this subject, madame will, no doubt, accord you an audience."

"With what offence do you charge Clarice?" asked Pauline.

"I charge her with none," returned Annunciata; "by her own actions she must stand or fall."

"Be it so," said Pauline; "and allow her to come out and either condemn or justify herself."

"Am I the ruler of this house? do I regulate the measures taken with the unhappy one?" asked Annunciata, her lip trembling with suppressed emotion.

"That is a question you may one day have to answer before the throne of the Searcher of all hearts," replied my friend, who was totally regardless of all the hints which I and others around her could give her to be silent; "but at least you know what is the nature of the offence of our sister; and you know well that it is not what it is said to be."

I shall never forget the expression of Annunciata's countenance at the moment Pauline uttered the last

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sentence. A livid flash, I know not how to describe it, passed over her marble features, and her eye scintillated with indignation. She seemed to gasp for breath; and though her lips parted several times, as if she was about to speak, yet she remained silent during some seconds. At length, after an effort similar to that used by a person who is endeavouring to swallow some bulky substance, she uttered the following words, with a calmness which perfectly astonished me, and gave me no small idea of the self-control which she could use: "Permit me, Sister Pauline, to recommend you to unburthen your mind on the subject in question to those whom it may concern, and not to one who, though much loved by madame, is still considered as being too young to be admitted into her confidence. But, sisters," she added, looking round the circle, "I am interrupted in the deliverance of a message to you with which I have been charged by our reverend father. Your presence is requested in the chœur to assist at an act of humiliation; it is feared that some grievous offence, in which we are all implicated, has brought down upon our unhappy household this especial and terrible exhibition of the Divine displeasure."

So saying, she turned hastily round and passed away; while some of the sisters muttered to others, "Can it be the contempt thrown upon the divine symbol to which the father alludes? we thought that that offence had been wiped away." Pauline gave me an expressive look, but there was no time for further speech: we hastened into the chœur, and had a solemn service, with various prayers and anthems not commonly resorted to, among which was one appointed to be used in the time of a fast, addressed to the Virgin. "Affecti pro peccatis nostris, quotidie cum lacrymis expectamus finem nostrum dolor cordis nostri ascendat ad te ad te, Domine. Domine ne memineris iniquitatum nostrarum antiquarum."

After this service the father dismissed us, recommending fasting and private prayer till evening, than which nothing, obviously, could more tend to give the disease all possible advantage to work upon our empty stomachs and exhausted frames. Of such absurdities are human beings guilty, when they would be wiser than that which is written. I must, however, remark

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that Father Joachim did not mention the subject of the fall of the image, as we had expected.

The funeral of the poor Mère Ursule took place in the afternoon. It was hastened over with as small reference to forms as possible. After which the house was incensed and sprinkled with holy water, and several measures taken for purification: and it is possible that if we had all had a good dinner that day, with air and tonic medicine, we might have escaped the contagion, at least we might have had a better prospect of so doing: but after a weary and harassing day, and a supper of lentiles and soup maigre, we had an additional nocturnal service, and more than the usual number of lugubrious chants.

My reader may have already anticipated that the night did not pass away without another alarm. Such symptoms appeared, immediately after the service, in one of the sisters of the black veil, and also in one of the menials, that the abbess ordered the infirmary to be prepared with all haste, and sent immediately for the physician who attended the house.

The infirmary was a vast apartment, connected with the house by a long gallery, which extended itself over the cloisters on the western side of the cimetière; and being so distant from the rest of the house, it was hoped the contagion would not extend from those already sick, when placed there, to those who were yet in health, remaining in their usual places; and such of the sisters as were employed to attend the sick were enjoined not to communicate with the other part of the family.

The disease was now ascertained to be the black or spotted fever; a most awful pestilence, highly infectious, and very sudden in its effects. It was attended with a dreadfully ghastly appearance in the patient, and with an almost insufferable exhalation from the bodies of the dead and dying. Nor can it be conceived how dreadful was the sense of being shut up with a pestilence like this, and without the possibility of flying to a purer air; at the same time wanting that which alone can bring consolation under such circumstances, namely, the assurance of salvation in Christ the Lord. But this assurance, as I have before remarked, never can be enjoyed by persons who believe that their future happiness depends in any degree upon their own works or deservings. Hence no Roman Catholic can ever

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enjoy it while he is a Roman Catholic; for although some may have arrived at some sort of confidence in the power of Christ to save them from everlasting misery, yet I know not that any serious Roman Catholic was ever entirely delivered from the dread of the purifying fires of purgatory.

This doctrine of purgatory, according to the Theological Catechism of the Jesuits, is as follows:—Purgatory is a subterraneous place, full of fire, and near to hell, where souls suffer the pains which they have merited during this life by their offences. Those only enter purgatory who have gone out of the world in the grace of God, but who have not entirely satisfied the divine justice by the penances which they were obliged to make for their sins. They remain in purgatory a longer or shorter time, according to what they have to pay for the satisfaction of the divine justice. No souls are exempted from the fires of purgatory but those of little children,—those who die the moment they are baptized,—those of martyrs,—and those saints who have suffered and done great things for the love of God.*

Purgatory, then, with all its horrors, was before me at that time; for I felt that my state did not answer to that of any of the four descriptions of persons mentioned above; and if some light of truth had glanced upon my mind when I heard Clarice reasoning with the bishop in the subterranean chapel, the superstitious fears arising from the gloomy scenes in which I was at that present time involved had entirely overclouded this transient ray, and plunged me into a state of darkness and horror which rendered me more miserable than I had ever before been.

For six hours, however, after the sickening of the two sisters who had been carried to the infirmary—a period almost entirely filled up with gloomy forms—we were kept, as it were, in a state of suspense, till at length our dread repose was broken by two circumstances which took place in the same hour, which was that of midnight, namely, the tolling of the bell for the passing of the soul of one of the sisters in the infirmary, and the sickening of another in her cell. Well do I remember that night. I was dressing for the officium nocturnum, and there was gloomy and hollow moaning

* Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites.

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of the wind through the passages and chambers at the moment the passing-bell reached my ear. I instantly opened the door of my cell, and calling to one of the family who was passing along the gallery, asked what the bell imported.

"'Tis that Sister Adeline is passing away: the Holy Mother have mercy upon her!" replied the person to whom I spoke; "and we are preparing to take Sister Marguerite into the infirmary."

"What, Marguerite!" I exclaimed; "the fair and blooming Marguerite—is she too going? God help us all!" But the sister had passed on; and while I stood fixed in the doorway of my cell, I saw the menials bearing away the fair nun to that place from which she was to return no more to mingle with her former companions. We had already lost three of our number, without counting Ella Rosa, for the sister who had sickened at the same time with poor Adeline died before the noon of the next day; and as funerals were now so frequent, and attendance on the corpses so dangerous, the superieure caused the services to be abridged as much as possible, forbidding any person, from curiosity or affection, to raise the cloth which covered the faces of the defunct. Both the sisters were buried that day, and before night another sickened, and was carried to the infirmary.

At this time the alarm became so general, and the physician so decided, that he insisted that we should not be fatigued and harassed by such incessant exercises and forms as had hitherto been required, alleging that priests might be procured to say masses for us in the chapel, while we enjoyed that repose which was actually necessary for our safety. This was complied with, and the number of our services materially abridged.

There were now several of the sisters in the infirmary. These were chiefly the younger ones; while the elders being engaged in attending on the sick, there was so much relaxation of discipline among those who remained well, that I was enabled to enjoy much more of the society of Pauline than I had done at any time before things were in this state. It was about a week since the death of la Mère Ursule, and the sickness still seemed to be extending its ravages (though as yet only three of our number in the house were actually dead), when one evening, at the hour of supper, it was ru-

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moured that Clarice had taken the fever. We were in the refectory, and Annunciata came in to the superieure to inform her, that having been with the unhappy sister, to take her her supper, as it was her custom to do, she had found her suffering all the earlier symptoms of the horrid disease.

"Mother of Mercy!" exclaimed the superieure, with much concern in her manner; "how can this be, shut up as she is within my apartments?"

"'Tis the hand of an offended God," remarked la Mère Aymée, who was near the superieure; "the Lord have mercy on her soul!"

Every one made the sign of the cross on her breast, while Annunciata stood as if waiting the directions of her superieure, which, after a few moments' silence, she solicited by saying, "Is it the pleasure of madame that the patient should be removed to the infirmary?"

"No, my daughter," replied the abbess, "no; I have promised it to our holy father the bishop that this unhappy one shall never mingle with her holy sisters. Under this solemn promise I obtained for her those comforts of light and air, and nourishing sustenance, which she has enjoyed in the cell within my apartments. I have bound myself with a solemn vow—a vow whereon my eternal happiness depends—that no one should enter her cell but myself and our much-lamented sister Ursule. If she live, I will supply all her wants; if she die, I will lay out her cold and pestilential remains. I will run all risks, for I am bound so to do. Those who are not afraid may give me all I require through the grate; but I have said it, and I will abide by it: and may this act of obedience be a merit recorded in my favour, to balance the sin I committed in permitting this unhappy one to mingle so long with the rest of the family!"

"Oh! my mother! my mother!" exclaimed Annunciata, acting her hypocritical part with admirable skill, advancing to the superieure, and half-kneeling before her, while she bowed her head upon her hand, her veil at the same time falling over and shrouding her face, "permit your child, your favoured child, to entreat you not to incur this frightful hazard; it is impossible but that the deadly pestilence should seize you, if shut up with it in so narrow a cell. You cannot but inhale the corrupt breath, and suck in the dreadful poison." And turning suddenly to us, her face all working with vehe-

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ment agitation, the reason of which I now well understand, "Mothers, sisters," she said, "I beseech you interfere and prevent our blessed parent from performing this act of heroic and meritorious piety."

Being thus called upon, we all spoke, offering our own services, and entreating the superieure to seek absolution from the vow which she had made, and permit Clarice to be removed to the infirmary.

"It cannot be," she replied; "you know not the reasons for my conduct."

"But, madame," said Pauline, "why should you fear? What harm can the dying Clarice do to us? Our principles are all too well confirmed. Her opinions, even were she in health and able to support them, could not surely, at this awful crisis, shake our faith in that religion in which alone safety is to be found."

Pauline was proceeding, and the superieure would not have interrupted her, for, as I have said elsewhere, it is not the policy of a convent to give any check to such incautious betrayals of the thoughts as sometimes proceed from persons under the influence of sudden or high excitement. Neither did I know what next might fall from her lips, when, being almost overcome by terror, for I dreaded a discovery of our midnight visit to the chambers below more than I can describe, I suddenly seized her hand, thus arresting her attention, saying at the same time, "Sister, have you forgotten? know you not that Clarice is under the influence of the evil one? And how can you imagine that it is safe to converse or hold any intercourse with her?"

Pauline reddened, and was silent; but Annunciata said, "Our dear sister seems to have indulged some erroneous notions respecting Clarice;" and she looked to the superieure, as if to remind her that it would be well to inquire into these notions. But the superieure did not appear to be willing to pursue this hint. She had arisen from the supper-table, and taking a solemn leave of us, withdrew with the air of a martyr about to ascend to the place of execution. Alas! the hypocrite. May God have changed her heart!

At this time, the imminent danger of our own persons, together with the constant alarms arising from the sickening of one and another about us, so perplexed our minds, that Pauline and I could not reason coolly on this strange resolution of madame as regarding Cla-

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rice. On the whole, we thought well of her conduct to this poor creature. Neither were we so uneasy respecting the future happiness of the unfortunate young woman as might have been expected, considering the dark state of our own minds at that time; knowing that she was what we then called a heretic, and believing, as we thought we did, that there was no salvation beyond the pale of the Roman Catholic church. But, as I before said, our minds were, at that time, in a very perplexed and confused state; a state, as it were, of amazement and terror. In the mean time, that is, from the period in which we had first heard of the illness of Clarice until we were apprized of its termination, two more sisters sickened, and one died; and we were continually informed that the fever made its regular progress with Clarice; that one frightful symptom after another took place, and that there remained but little hope of life.

We had, from the very first, been earnest with Annunciata to permit us to go to the grate of the cell within the superieure's apartment, in order that we might take one last look of the fair Clarice, and this she had always declined; but on the second evening, meeting her in the gallery, and observing more softness in her manner than was common—for she had so far yielded to human infirmity as to have been weeping—we made our petition, and she replied, that if we would steal softly into the superieure's apartment at midnight, she would make our excuses if we were detected; at the same time warning us that we ran a great risk in coming within the air of the tainted chamber.

Having, however, obtained this permission, we watched till midnight, and then stole softly into that suite of apartments particularly appropriated to the superieure. There were several chambers, one of which was furnished as a chapel, having an image of the Virgin treading on the serpent, with the motto mentioned before; namely, "Ipsa conteret caput tuum." Within this chapel was another chamber, and a grate which opened into the cell where Clarice lay. In this chamber was a brazier, from which proceeded a faint and sickly odour, of some drug which was burning there in order, as we supposed, to counteract the influence of the infected air. Approaching carefully and silently to the grate, we looked in, and saw the whole cell, by means of two wax tapers burning before a crucifix

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against the inner wall of the chamber. There was a double-barred window at the other end of the cell, which, from its aspect, must certainly have opened on the cimetière; and a pallet, such as we all used, in a corner of the room. The light fell faintly and indistinctly on the bed, yet we saw one lying on it, in an almost lifeless state to all appearance, for we observed not that the figure moved. The window of the chamber being open, we felt the cold air blow upon us through the grate, and were not surprised to observe that the candles burnt unsteadily in consequence; but the flickering light glancing on the pale face of the person in the bed only made the aspect of death still more dreadful, and we stood looking earnestly, and, as it were, fixed to the place we had first taken. By the bed sat the superieure, bending from time to time over the inanimate sufferer. At one time drying her own eyes with a white handkerchief, and at another wiping the clammy brow of the unhappy sister. Nor did she fail, even at this awful moment (I describe things as I then saw and comprehended them), to use such earnest entreaties that, late as it was, she would be persuaded to take some thought for her immortal soul, as might be expected from a sincere Roman Catholic.

"Oh! my daughter," she said, "my daughter! be persuaded now in this moment, this last moment, perhaps, of your existence, to turn again to the bosom of that holy mother church which extends her arms to receive you, her lost one. Speak but a word, raise but a finger of that poor hand, and I will recall the father; it is not yet too late. Say but a word, and he shall be here this moment: but, ah! no:" and she shrieked, "Help—help, my God! the spirit is departing—the breath, the breath —Oh for one hour of life—one moment of repentance. My daughter! my daughter!" and she fell with her face on the bed as in a swoon.

Pauline and I flew to force open the door; but not being able, we ran to the cell of Annunciata, bidding her hasten to the superieure, and rousing the whole sisterhood with our shrieks.

"What new horror is this?" said la Mère Genefride, running out into the gallery; "it were better almost to be in the fires of purgatory than to live as we now do."

"Clarice is dying!" exclaimed Pauline, "and without the sacraments! The Lord have mercy on her soul!"

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"That," remarked one of the sisters, "cannot be expected, unless the sacraments are duly administered. In default of this sacrament of extreme unction, all the sins she has committed since her last confession will be on her poor soul for ages: but how could they have neglected to administer it?"

"You speak without reflection," said la Mère Genefride; "how could the sacrament be administered if she were not in a disposition to receive it. I have understood that she persisted to the last in refusing the assistance of Father Joachim."

"Did you see her before she died, mother?" I asked.

"No one has seen her but through the grate," she replied, "with the exception of madame, who has done all for her which the tenderest parent could do: but," she added, "what avail our tears for the poor creature? rather let us pray for her, and engage the mother of mercy in her cause: though I fear there is little hope;" and turning away, she went weeping to her cell, in which example she was followed by most of the sisters: Pauline and myself taking the opportunity of not being observed to shut ourselves up together. But when together, what could we say to each other?—where were we to look for comfort? We were miserable indeed: but whence were we to seek for any alleviation of our sufferings? We wept a long time in extreme bitterness of soul, and then began to talk and reason with each other; then to lament the fate of Clarice, as lost for ever; then to recall the scene in the subterranean chapel, and to repeat all that she had there said, till at length a partial glimpse of truth began again to shed itself over our dark minds; when the question presented itself, May it not be possible that Clarice has understood more of the truth than some of those who have condemned her? Can this complicated and contradictory system of religion be of divine origin? Are not our spiritual rulers taking more upon themselves than Scripture authorizes? Wherefore, if they teach nothing but what the Bible approves, do they so carefully keep the Bible out of our sight?

Thus as alps on alps arise, so did one doubt after another rise in our minds, till the natural morning broke upon us; for the spiritual morning could not yet be said to have appeared to us, though the shadows of night were passing away.

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We were anxious to know if Clarice were actually dead; and watching for Annunciata as soon as it was light, she informed us that she had revived after we had seen her; that the abbess had entertained some hope for her, for a short time; and that she was still alive, though entirely insensible and suffering dreadful convulsions.

After matins, at which the attendance was very small, we again inquired. But we were not assured of her death till the afternoon; and at midnight were summoned to attend the funeral. No reference was made to the manner of her death, I mean with regard to her having refused the sacraments, in the circumstances of her burial, excepting that the ceremony was shortened, and that the faded crown in which she had made her profession was not placed on her head. This we all observed, and received it as a terrible token of the opinion the superieure had formed of her spiritual state and present situation.

I never saw terror and dismay painted in such marked colours on any countenances in the degree in which they were depicted on those of the sisters during that awful midnight service. Nor, were I to live for ever, should I forget the fixed and marble features of Annunciata as she stood near the head of the bier, with her eyes riveted on that which lay thereon.

"It is done," said Pauline, as we returned from the grave; "it is done. Alas! sweet Clarice! thou art now beyond their reach. Angelique, I am convinced of what I said impatiently, that all has not been right; and that the blood of Clarice will not be unrevenged."

"Do you suppose that they have killed her?" I asked.

"No," she answered, "the pestilence saved them the actual deed: but they have wished her death, and they have rejoiced in it."

"Good heaven! Pauline, what do you mean?"

"Our Lady forgive me," she replied, "if I have wronged any one: but if I saw not triumph—ay, murderous triumph! lurking under the hood of that Annunciata this night, I never saw it before, nor do I know the characters which betray it."

I have before remarked that the horrors which had, as it were, pursued each other through the house, horrors which had naught of that which is simple, kind, or natural, to relieve by contrast,—like the frightful fresco in

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the Campo Santa at Pisa, called the triumph of death, in which the ravages of that king of terrors are represented under every imaginary and real modification, to the utter exclusion of one single ray of hope or joy,—had had the effect at first of so overwhelming me with grief, that I wept continually: but afterward, when these scenes were prolonged, I became stupid, and was scarcely conscious of any feeling. Nature must be relieved, or sink beneath a weight which it is not formed to bear; and when no other relief is supplied, it is compelled to relieve itself by a sort of stupor, in which condition it becomes hardened to all that may befall it.

The reaction after this state of stupor is often so terrible as to endanger the reason, especially in persons not enjoying the consolations of religion. Nevertheless I have no doubt that this temporary stupefaction is a resource supplied by a kind Providence, to help the sufferer through trials which otherwise would be intolerable to flesh and blood. But whether the case be a common one or not, this I know, that after having paid the last tribute to the memory of Clarice, I became so stupid, so lethargic, that I looked on all things around me as a frightful vision in which I had no part, and from which nothing seemed able to awaken me. No! if I had seen every one of the sisters lying dead at my feet, I believe that I should not have wept. Pauline suffered more than I did, at that time; probably because she had naturally more elasticity of mind, and was more easily excited to hope than I was. Hence she was subject to greater and more frequent shocks and disappointments.

We had previously lost five of our number; for we had buried the fair and blooming Marguerite, and another menial. Clarice was the sixth of our household whose obsequies we had attended. Another fearful pause followed that ceremony, during which no death occurred, nor did any person sicken; though we had some alarm for the superieure, who, when she again appeared among us, which she did on the morning after the funeral of poor Clarice, looked so wan and abstracted, and was so incapable of exerting herself, that it was absolutely necessary for some one in the household to act in her place. La mere assistante was dead, la Mère Aymée was too old, and la Mère Genefride re-

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fused to come forward. Indeed, I believe that she was not required to do so.

Thus the authority naturally slid into the hands of Annunciata, who, sometimes in the name of the superieure, but oftener without using that name, began to reform what she pleased to call the abuses which had crept into the house during the late disorders. For instance, she forbade our going into each other's cells, and conversing so much with each other as we had done, on pain of complaint to the bishop. She re-established the usual number of prayers, that is, seven in the twenty-four hours, and added another, in consideration of the unhappy state of the household. She also enjoined private prayers and penances.

In all these things she was strongly supported by Father Joachim, who, on suspecting that some of us were privately somewhat restive, thundered an exordium in our ears, on the Sunday which followed the funeral honours paid to poor Clarice, in which he described in the most lively colours all the horrors of hell and the torments of the damned.

"Hell," said this preacher of evil news, "is in the centre of the earth; and all those who die in mortal sin are precipitated into it." And then he enumerated these mortal sins, namely, pride, avarice, luxury, anger, gluttony, envy, and idleness; bringing the last of these to bear upon many present, because they loved their ease, he asserted, better than the services of religion, and were, as it were, asleep, even when kneeling within the precincts of the chœur. He then returned to the subject he had selected, telling us poor affrighted creatures, that if we should die in the state of mortal sin in which most of us then were, we should assuredly be precipitated into hell, to suffer eternal and infinite pains, and the company of devils, which were to be our tormentors, and to be tormented with us.

In all this long and frightful exordium was not one ray of hope or comfort, of light or joy; but, as I before said, I was in that state of dulness and insensibility, that I did not seem to care what was said to me; and though I did not actually doubt what the father asserted, I was certainly of opinion that he was keeping back some part of the truth, and in fact exhibiting a garbled statement of the dealings of the Almighty with his creatures.

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This sermon afforded subject of conversation at dinner, and gave Annunciata occasion, the superieure being absent, to reprove us so severely, and with so great an air of superiority, on the sort of spirit we had lately shown, with regard to seeking rest and repose rather than endeavouring to obtain merit by our good works, that it was with some difficulty that we could restrain ourselves from demanding by what authority she presumed to pass so severe a censure on the actions of persons who were many of them her seniors in the establishment. La Mère Genefride, however, took upon herself to answer her, saying, that she thought it somewhat out of season, when the pestilence was actually within our walls, to require any unusual severities from the few sisters remaining in health; but Annunciata reproved her with such an air of superior sanctity, as made her shrink into herself, proceeding, at the same time, to enlarge upon the merit of prayer and penitence, especially under such circumstances as we then were, and to bring forth all the arguments for mortifying the flesh, commonly brought forward by persons of her persuasion,—alleging that these efforts should never be relaxed, inasmuch as the first of saints can never deserve the final grace, or the grace of perseverance, even by the most meritorious efforts.

"That is," replied Pauline, "you mean to assert, that we never can attain a state of holiness so exalted, as to be assured that we shall persevere to the end."

"We cannot merit the grace of perseverance," replied Annunciata, "because, in order that God should grant us this final and infinite favour—namely, the assurance that we shall die in a state of grace—we must merit infallible and efficacious assistance, to prevent us from sinning in the hour of death."

"From whence," returned Pauline, with that air of arch simplicity which her features so easily assumed, "do you derive these principles, Sister Annunciata? Are they found in the Holy Scriptures?"

Annunciata gave her a searching look, and seemed to me to be more disconcerted and embarrassed than I had often seen her, but recovering herself presently, she answered, "I teach you nothing but what is authorized by the high authorities of the only true and perfect church on earth."

"Are we to consider you, Sister Annunciata," asked

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Pauline, "as our future ruler in this house? Do pray inform us in what light we are to look upon you; in order that we may shape our conduct accordingly."

"That question," replied the nun, with perfect calmness, "might as well be addressed to madame; I am only what she makes me; I merely take the place which is assigned me by my superiors."

"All that I have to request," resumed Pauline, with equal calmness, "is, that I may know what that place may be; as much that concerns me must depend upon it."

"I do not quite comprehend," returned Annunciata, "how my situation in this family should concern you, Sister Pauline."

Pauline made no answer, and it was apparent that Annunciata found it difficult to retain her calmness of deportment any longer, though she made strong and visible efforts to do so, and finally succeeded.

The same evening the superieure called us into her presence, and then in a very solemn manner informed us that it was determined by the spiritual rulers of the house, among whom she enumerated the bishop, Father Joachim, and herself, that the place of la Mère Ursule, as la mère assistante, should be filled up by the sister Annunciata, as a step to the place of superieure, in case of her own death; "which event," she added, "if I am doomed to suffer, for any length of time, what I have lately gone through, cannot be far distant; although I am entitled, by my age, to look forward to spending many years with you, my children." And she wept as she spoke, and exhibited a countenance much altered by recent suffering.

The sister Annunciata was universally dreaded, if not hated, in the house. This declaration, therefore, was not received without some manifestations of discontent; to which, however, few dared to give utterance any further than by expressing their earnest hopes that their present superieure might long be spared to them.

"I shall not leave you the sooner, my children," she replied, "for having informed you of these arrangements; neither would you lose any thing by my removal: the sister Annunciata being every way, from her superior sanctity, her knowledge of all matters regarding the special duties of those devoted to our Holy Mother, and the nobility of her birth and carriage,

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fully as fit as I am for the important office which I fill; and more fit," she added, "when the painful nature of some of my duties are considered; inasmuch as she has not that weakness of heart which has made me bow beneath the strokes, which it has pleased the Supreme Ruler of all things to lay upon me within the last few weeks."

The superieure melted into tears, as she uttered these last words; and that very weakness of heart, of which she complained, seemed to many of us that very part of her character which we should most miss in her intended successor. Yet what weakness or softness she alluded to we could not understand; for certainly we had always found her sufficiently severe.

Annunciata was not present during that part of the conference which I have related; but, being called for, she entered with her arms folded and her eyes cast down, with all that show of proud humility and affected meekness which the ambitious well know how to put on while ascending the ladder, and which they equally well know how to put off when they have acquired the highest round. God forgive me, if I wrong this young woman! but I certainly believe that ambition was so predominant a passion in her mind, that there was no crime at which she would have hesitated to remove a hinderance to the gratification of this passion.

Having entered, she was presented to us as one to whom, notwithstanding her youth, we were to look up as to a superieure; and when I afterward learned that she was related to the bishop, who was the spiritual head of the household, I ceased to wonder at her proposed elevation, although both Pauline and I wondered at the influence she had acquired over the superieure, who had always appeared to us to be a woman of spirit.

It was six o'clock in the afternoon when we were dismissed from the presence of the abbess. I would have my reader mark the hour, and ask himself if the objects of ambition, however high, are worthy the pursuit of rational creatures,—knowing, as they must do, how uncertain are all earthly possessions, and how suddenly all that we have so eagerly desired may be torn from our grasp; and how often it happens that there is a canker at the root, which imbitters even the short moments of possession.

It was natural for the eyes of the household to be

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upon the sister Annunciata during the whole of next day; some looking upon her with eager curiosity, in order to ascertain in what manner she would bear her honours; others eying her in the spirit of envy; and a third description of persons beholding her with that dull wonder with which inferior minds are apt to contemplate all such as are suddenly raised above them, in however small a degree. It was equally natural also that Pauline and I should speak of her when the first opportunity offered of being alone, which was at the hour of recreation at noon the next day.

We were walking in the garden, at the higher part of it, facing the open windows of the infirmary, in which three of the sick still lay, though, as we trusted, in a state of convalescence. We began our discourse by speaking of the changes which had been wrought in the house by the ravages of the fever, and I expressed my hope that the pestilence had fulfilled its commission, and that we might now be spared all future horrors of this kind.

"Angelique!" said Pauline, and looked me hard in the face.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Nothing," she replied, "if—but no more of this. See you not that poor Annunciata, how she veils her imperiousness under the cloak of holy meekness, as if—as if we could not discern that which lies beneath; that aching heart, that sense of the emptiness of ambitious gratifications, that worm gnawing at the root."

"Why, Pauline," I answered, "you but yesterday were raving at this poor Annunciata, and saying that if she were promoted, you would certainly take the black veil in another house; and now your whole heart seems to be drawn out in pity for her."

"Because," she replied, and looked inquiringly at me again; and then, changing the discourse, she spoke of the fever, and asked me if I had heard any of the sisters state that those who had been seized with this dreadful malady experienced any previous symptoms which might, had they been attended to, have warned them of what they had to apprehend.

"Mother of mercy!" I exclaimed. "Dear Pauline, are you not well?" And I felt, dull as I had before been, that if I were to lose my Pauline, I should be lost indeed.

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"No, my Angelique," she replied, "there is no cause to be uneasy about me. But I am doing wrong to dweli on these things; I ought to recollect the entire confidence in God evinced in that subterranean chapel by the sweet Clarice; how she was enabled to maintain the truth without fear of man, and to retain her constancy to the last moment. Oh! Angelique, the more I think of it, the more am I convinced that Clarice was right."

"And we, in consequence, all wrong," I answered; "but I cannot reflect—I cannot reason! What is to become of us, if the church in which we trust is a deceitful one?"

"God help us!" replied Pauline, "the Lord have mercy upon us! Oh! that I could but once obtain the sight of a volume of the Holy Scriptures! Let the reformed churches, as they call them, be corrupt, as they are said to be; yet at least they have not this sin to lay to their charge, namely, that they withhold the Scriptures from their people."

I had remarked, during this conversation, that Pauline had more than once dropped certain imperfect and broken hints, which at one moment seemed to bear reference to Clarice, and at another to Annunciata. I had pressed her several times to explain these hints, but she always put me off, leaving at the same time, however, a sort of nameless dread upon my mind, and this dread was associated with Annunciata; for all anxiety with regard to poor Clarice was now necessarily at an end.

That same night we were all assembled at complines in the chœur. Annunciata had taken her place by the side of the superieure: my eyes were from time to time directed towards her; she stood in an attitude which I could not understand—it was not natural, yet I hardly knew why it was not so. The glare of the lamp fell upon her face—her beautiful face; the expression of that too was singular. She was at the head of the circle of sisters, I was at the other end of that circle, and the Kyrie Eleison was rising in full chorus to the vaulted roof, when suddenly a flash of brilliant and burning crimson mounted to the cheeks of her on whom I was thus intently gazing, adding a sudden and unnatural lustre to her dark Italian eye; at the same moment she began to lose the firmness of her posture, and suddenly fell back from that seemingly holy circle which she was doomed never again to join.

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There was an immediate cessation of the choral harmony, the last imperfect note rising into a frightful and almost universal shriek; while one and another shrank back from the fainting sister, exclaiming, "Mère de misericorde, la peste, encore la peste, toujours la peste!"

"I knew it would be thus," said Pauline, who had been the first to raise the head of the unhappy sister; "I felt that it would be thus. Oh! Clarice! sweet Clarice! thou art now avenged."

I believe that I alone heard or understood this exclamation; but it was terrible to hear the wailings of the poor abbess, who had thrown herself on the pavement by the side of Annunciata; and truly her affrighted countenance was enough to fill every mind with horror. But the menials were lifting the sister, for the purpose of bearing her to the infirmary, when the abbess exclaimed, "Not to the infirmary—not to the infirmary—to my chamber." Annunciata had not spoken since she had fallen, till she had felt herself raised and had heard these words, "to my chamber,"—when, struggling convulsively, and speaking with effort—"No, no," she said, "not there, within that chamber—where she stood and knelt and prayed; and where that corpse"—the superieure placed her hand on her lips, saying, "Poor child, she raves—she knows not what she says—but do not heed her; obey my orders—convey her to my chamber, I will attend her myself—yet one moment and I will follow her—but this is too much;" and she clasped her hands, and raised her eyes, as if invoking mercy from above. Good God! thou alone canst tell what was then passing in her mind. Oh! who can appreciate the weight of crime and wo which she was, from that moment, doomed to sustain nearly alone; for with Annunciata failed the last of her female confidantes.

Well do I remember her figure as she stood looking up towards the ceiling of the chœur; but my attention was immediately drawn from her to the wretched sister whom they were bearing away out of our sight, and there were not many then present who ever saw her more. A few days finished the tragedy, and the noble and beautiful daughter of Colonna was the last victim of the terrible pestilence of which I have already said so much. Her grave was side by side with the plot of earth dedicated to her who had once been her chosen companion and most intimate associate; and thus

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would the memory of both these eminently beautiful sisters soon have perished together, had not certain circumstances arisen which connected the disastrous history of the unfortunate Clarice too intimately with my own fate to render it possible for me to forget the most trivial circumstance which I had ever known as relating to her. Although the time which I spent in the convent was very short, yet to look back upon it, and to view all the workings of my mind during that interval of my life, I could imagine that I had spent more years than in truth I had spent months under that roof.

CHAPTER VII.

TROUBLES FROM WITHOUT.

It was July when I professed; the pestilence had occurred some weeks afterward; it had continued about a month in the house, and from that period till the end of September nothing of any importance happened; but to say how deeply sad we were all this time would be impossible. Our numbers were diminished; several of our leading characters were no more, and it seemed that others were likely to follow, for la Mère Genefride was thoroughly depressed, and the superieure seemed to be quite unable to rouse herself. Indeed, her deportment was so extraordinary after the death of Annunciata, and she was so nervous and irritable, and so filled with superstitious terrors, that it was very evident that she was hardly fit for her station.

In the mean time, the troubles without were scarcely less than those within the house. The spirit of revolution and democracy had taken such hold of the lower classes in St. Siffren, and such fearful tumults were continually excited, that many of the better classes of the people were compelled to quit the town in all haste; and the noise of the uproars within the walls not unseldom reached to the very courts of the convent. Those who have been in the neighbourhood of a town in an uproar of this kind may be aware of the numerous alarming sounds which proceed from it. Sometimes,

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for instance, the roar of an intoxicated mob; again, the shrieks of distress, or the acclamations of persons accomplishing mischief; with the tintamarre of drums, bugles, trumpets, bells, hammers, and what not; and now and then the smoke of bonfires, and the sulphurous odour of rockets and wheels, and other fireworks.

There are no creatures on earth so timid as nuns; and when any of these symptoms of disorder reached our senses, to see how we all herded together, like frightened deer, and how miserably helpless we all looked, would have excited merriment in the breast of any one who did not properly consider that our situation was really quite as pitiable as it appeared to be.

It was one morning, after a night in which our quiet had been more than usually disturbed, that my friend Madame Verani appeared at the gate of the convent, earnestly requesting to see me and the superieure. She was evidently in haste, and much agitated. The superieure obeyed the call, taking me with her, and leaning upon my arm, in a state of high nervous excitement, as she descended to the parlour behind the grille. I immediately saw, by the raised colour of my friend, that she was in much perplexity, and she opened the conference by informing us, "That she and Monsieur Verani, with their infant son, were about to leave St. Siffren, where they could not possibly remain in safety many weeks longer; and that they thought it best to go before things came to extremity." She was proceeding, when the superieure, laying her hand on my arm, exclaimed, "Oh, Angelique! what is to become of us!" and then, falling back in her chair, yielded to a violent flood of hysterical tears.

Madame Verani, at the same instant, gave me a significant glance, and I contrived, while seeming to be busy about the superieure, so to edge myself between her and the grate as to receive a packet in my hand, and to convey it into my pocket—for nuns wear pockets, and mine was very convenient to me at this moment. Having effected this purpose, my friend took a hasty leave of us; and as the eyes which had once so sharply watched the novices were closed for ever, I soon found an opportunity to open my packet, Pauline being present.

These communications were of intense interest, both to me and to Pauline. The letters, which were one

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from Madame Verani to me, another to poor Clarice from her brother, and a third from some relations whom Pauline had in Switzerland, tended all to the same purport. They gave a frightful idea of the state of the country as it regarded politics; and added, that there was a report gone out in the town that a religieuse had been confined twenty years in the dungeons of the convent, and that the magistrates and populace threatened to break in and ascertain the fact for themselves. It farther stated, that the situation of the sisters would be horrible indeed, if exposed without protection to the brutality of the infuriated mob; and concluded with an earnest entreaty, backed by every argument which friendship and family love could bring forward, that we, that is, the three sisters Clarice, Pauline, and Angelique (though I should say that these were not the names used in the letters), would be persuaded, should any tumult occur, to tie a knot in our veils, and deliver ourselves up to the guidance of such persons as should claim us under that token *of the knotted veil.*

"What shall we do?" I said to Pauline.

"Do?" she replied. "Can you hesitate when Providence thus opens the door for us? Shall we not fly from this place of horrors? Oh! that Clarice could be with us. What will her brother feel when he knows that she is no more?" and we both wept from the idea of what this faithful brother would suffer when told of the dreadful end of his sister—dreadful as to this world, and all worldly considerations.

The question next occurred, shall we endeavour to give any alarm to the abbess? but we were prevented from pursuing this inquiry by another suggestion—is there, or is there not, any person in confinement in the dungeons? and may we not hasten the destruction of this miserable individual by this warning? even if we could give it with safety to ourselves. Being restrained by this reflection, we dared not to speak directly on the subject of our communication, though we gave many hints to the mothers and sisters, asking them what they proposed to do, should the convent of St. Siffren be treated like that of St. Claire at Nice?

"If it should be so ordained," replied la Mère Aymée, "why I will e'en lay me down among the ruins, and there will I lie and give up the spirit: for here have I dwelt through a long life under the protection of the

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Mother of Mercy, and here will I remain; and here will I lay my old bones, while my flesh mingles with the dust of those who are gone before."

"Mother," said Pauline, for we had got her by ourselves, beyond the hearing of the rest of the household, "what is to become of Sister Agnace when the dungeons are laid open?"

"Agnace!" said the old lady, starting, "what do you know of her?"

"Oh!" said Pauline, "I know all about her: I know her whole history."

"And who told it, daughters?" she asked.

"That tongue," replied Pauline, "which will never move again."

"Ay!" exclaimed the mother, who, as I before said, was nearly childish, "she knew it all, and it was she who advised that she should be put out of the way. It was a sad business, daughters. The poor thing was so young; she was not more than eighteen: she would not be fifty if she were now living."

"And she is living, you know, mother," said Pauline.

"I cannot say," replied the mother; "I was never in their confidence: but I always understood that she had died some ten years after she had been incarcerated."

"Who told you, mother, that she had died?"

"I cannot bear it in mind," she replied; "but it was well known when—but my memory is gone. Did she not die of the pestilence?"

"When?" asked Pauline.

"Were you not speaking of that poor Clarice?" returned the mother.

"No," replied Pauline; "of Agnace. Is she dead, or is she still in confinement?"

"What, in this house!" exclaimed the mother; "Agnace did you say? how should she be living. It was thirty years ago, I tell you."

"But what did they confine her for?" asked Pauline.

"They knew best," returned the old nun. "What am I, that I should judge my superieures. They did as the church directed. Is not our holy mother church infallible?" and she crossed herself, and mumbled a prayer, sinking again into her usual state of quiet imbecility.

"Poor soul! at any rate," remarked Pauline, "she is not one of the deceivers; she at least, I trust, is free from this crime."

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"Deceivers," I repeated, "your principles are changing, Pauline."

"It may be so," she answered; "but this poor Agnace!"

"God only knows," I replied, "but I am weary of all this mummery and mystery. I have lost my confidence in my spiritual guides. I am ready to doubt all religion, and to fancy that it is all made up by ambitious men and women for their own ends."

"What!" said Pauline, "have you forgotten Clarice, and all that she said in that awful subterraneous scene? Can you for an instant suppose that there is no reality in that which supported a creature so young, so weak, so helpless in all appearance, under circumstances of such inconceivable horror as those in which she stood, and where there was no wondering world around to admire her constancy or condemn her obstinacy? Oh! Angelique, there must be more in religion than we have yet learned."

I recollect little more of this conversation. The harrowing scenes which soon followed have effaced the particulars of it from my mind.

It was about four days after this—days in which nothing occurred, as far as I remember, and in which we followed, as usual, our dull round of formalities—when, being in the garden with Pauline soon after nones, and being deeply engaged in conversing upon the extraordinary purport of the letters which had been brought to me by Madame Verani, we were startled, during a pause of our discourse, by a sort of low rushing sound, resembling, more nearly than any thing else I can conceive, the breaking of a dam at a very great distance, and the consequent bursting of some torrent.

"Hark!" exclaimed Pauline.

The rushing sound continued, hardly becoming more distinct or audible.

"It is the wind," I said: for although the day was clear, there was a considerable agitation caused by the air among the higher branches of the cedars.

"No," said Pauline, "no, it is not the wind;" and she looked terrified.

"Is it a mountain torrent?" I said; "if so, we should see the brook swell presently" (I have before mentioned that a stream ran from the hills through the convent garden); and we immediately walked towards the

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rill: but saw no change in it. It was keeping its gentle course through its flowery channels, and we stood awhile on its banks.

"Ah, Angelique!" said Pauline, "why am I so sad, so full of apprehension:" and clasping her hands, "Oh, God!" she exclaimed, "merciful God! direct and guide us. If we are in error, remove the clouds of doubt and darkness which obscure our minds; lead us into the truth; enable us to fix our confidence where only it should be placed; and as to the rest—as to this present world—do with us according to thy good pleasure." So saying, she threw her arms around me suddenly, adding, "But if it be thy good pleasure, Lord, grant that I may not be parted from my own sweet Angelique."

For a moment we seemed to be quite carried away by our feelings: but the next instant, recollecting ourselves, we were made aware of an increase in the sound which had first excited our fears.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Pauline, "they are up in St. Siffren; the town is in tumult. Can you not distinguish the tones of human voices? and it is a general and appalling tumult." So saying, she ran into the house, and meeting several of the sisters, who were scattered about, she spread the alarm through the house. There was a narrow pointed door which opened from one of the chambers upon a winding stair, which led up to a tower from whence the whole town of St. Siffren might be seen. This door was always kept locked: but the superieure, hearing of the alarm, sent for the portress; and having caused it to be opened, she ascended with some of the elders, and we the younger part of the family were not backward in following her. There were narrow slits of windows presenting themselves at every turn of these stairs, some opening towards the mountains, and others in the direction of the valley; while those on the south looked directly down upon the town below, and seemed terribly high, from the exalted site of the convent. Having reached one of these, the noise which we had heard from the garden burst violently upon our ears. It was that of an enraged populace, so aptly described in Scripture by the roaring of the sea; and accompanied with the clang of martial instruments. We had heard noises of this kind before, but never simultaneous and terrific, like those

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which arose to our ears at that moment; and we also observed the signal of desolation, namely, the tri-coloured flag, fixed on the summit of the great dome of the church of St. Siffren, from which the cross had already been torn down.

"Great heaven!" exclaimed Pauline; "the moment for resolution is arrived—our deliverance or our death is at hand. Shall we speak? Shall we tell the superieure what she has to dread?"

"Agnace," I said, "that unhappy one in the dungeon, might we not thus fix her doom? No: let things take their course. If they have done this sin, they have every thing to fear; and they will deserve their fate. If not, God will protect them."

At that instant the superieure passed us, hastening down the steps with the utmost precipitance, and giving directions to the portress to send immediately for Father Joachim. But the abbess being gone, and many of the elder religieuses having retired to their cells, no doubt in order to invoke the aid of those helpless idols who themselves were doomed to speedy destruction, several of us younger ones remained at the windows of the tower, fixed to the spot, and scarcely remarking the approaching shadows of the evening, until the dark outlines of the great church and bastions of the town were marked on the horizon, and a new light burst upon the scene, from the lurid glare of a huge bonfire which, as far as we could discern, had been lighted up in the great square of the town, called La Place. The light from this fire was such as to show the figures of all the neighbouring buildings, and to cause the copings, which in many instances were of tin, to glare fearfully, and as if they were already ignited. The uproar increased at the same time, and most terrifying yells arose, from one moment to another, from amid the troubled city. Still, however, there was no indication that any attack was meditated upon the convent; and as we had omitted the service called vespers, allowing the usual hour to pass away in our terror, we were called to complines, perhaps an hour earlier than usual. Father Joachim was not present, another person officiating in his place.

It was the end of the month of September, and it was quite dark before the service was finished; but just as we were about to conclude it, a tremendous shout as if close to the convent, filled the whole chapel, and died

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away along the passages which branched from it. This shout was accompanied by the heavy trampling of many feet; while the red glare of torches shone into the chapel, rendering the Gothic outlines of the windows near the roof distinctly visible; illuminating at the same time the gildings and fresco paintings on the ceiling, and seeming, as it were, almost to animate the figure (larger than life) of the foundress of our order, which was painted in the centre of the roof. A tremendous knocking, or rather hammering, at the door of the house next ensued; and in an instant, closing our books and throwing them from us, we all fled in different directions, some to one part of the house, some to another, while Pauline and I made our way into the cimetière, attempting to open a door which led from thence into the garden: but before we could ascertain whether we could open this door or not, I heard my own name called, and the next moment, the portress, all trembling, and in great alarm, informed me that I must hasten to the parlour and present myself to the bailiff of St. Siffren.

"Gracious heaven!" I exclaimed; "and for what?"

The portress could not answer this question; but forcibly separating Pauline from me, for that faithful friend would, I verily believe, have followed me unto death, she drove me before her (I know not how better to express myself) into the parlour, where I found the abbess in conversation with a man of the coarsest aspect and manner, who was without the grille. This man was seated, though the superieure was standing, and he wore a cocked-hat, garnished with a tri-coloured rosette.

"This young woman," he said, as if carrying on a speech already commenced, "that is, the kinswoman of Citizen Verani, is the person I desire to see. Citizen Verani is a friend of mine. I therefore choose to befriend his cousin. You have nothing further to do with my motives, nor am I disposed to listen to your superstitious and ridiculous jargon. I understand that you people of the cloister are deep in the merchandise of lies: therefore I advertise you that I know the citizen Cecile Recordi, who was living awhile with her relations in the town of St. Siffren, and that I choose to speak with her myself." Then seeing me, "Come forward, young woman," he said, "put aside your mummeries, and exhibit your face; maybe I have seen a worse."

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I looked at the superieure, in order to ascertain what she would wish me to do or say; and this short delay was the means of bringing a volley of oaths and blasphemies from the dreadful reprobate; although, when he had duly examined me through the bars, he laughed aloud, and passed some low joke respecting the cage, whose bars he swore he would speedily break, in order that if there were any more young birds such as I was confined therein, they might speedily find their wings. Then adding, "Well, fair citizen, I wish you to understand this much, that you are now as entirely at liberty as I am, and that you have nothing to do but to come round to where I stand, and place your arm within mine, and if you are not happy then, why all I can say is this, that it will be more your own fault than mine; and so much for you, Citizen Recordi. But now for you!" he added, addressing the superieure, while his coarse features worked with rage and scorn,—"do you flatter yourself, vile and hypocritical instrument of tyranny and hypocrisy, that your abominable doings are hidden from the world, and that the revenge of the people will not reach you sooner or later? You tremble, I see; and well you may! I need but speak the word, and the justly infuriated populace will break in upon you and compel you to give an account of your dark and secret transactions. But you have one more chance for your life, wretched woman; produce the miserable creature whom you, and those who have gone before you, have incarcerated these many years. Go, this instant, and open her dungeon and bring her out: or by—" and he swore a dreadful oath, "the populace shall be let in upon you, and you shall be torn limb from limb."

The superieure, though more dead than alive, solemnly protested her innocence; and assured him, that although she could not answer for what might have been done before her time, there neither then was nor ever had been a person confined in a subterraneous cell since she had filled the place of superieure.

The bailiff shook his head, and replied, "Well, woman, you have sealed your own perdition—it is done!" and muttering something, of which we heard only certain blasphemous expressions, which made our blood freeze in our veins, he rushed out of the parlour-door, leaving us behind the grate, in a state of horror which I cannot describe. By this time all fear of the superieure

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had passed from my mind, shrinking, as it were, before the more terrible images excited by the blasphemous democrat; and I, therefore, being alone with her, as I was, dared to entreat her, if there were any person confined in the dungeons, instantly to set her free; and permit her to be conveyed, by the garden-gate, into some place where she might be concealed from the populace. I even offered to be her agent in this work; and to sooth and reconcile the sufferer so far to what had passed as to prevent her from appearing against her persecutors.

"I assure you, and you may believe me," replied the abbess, "that you are under a deception; and I am willing now to declare, in the name of the sovereign queen of heaven, that at this moment, to the extent of my belief, there is no such unhappy creature under this roof." She was proceeding, when a shout more near, more terrible than any I had ever heard before, burst upon our senses, entering from without, and being re-echoed by the wild shrieks of the sisters within. This horrible shout, which resembled what I could have imagined to be the yells of demons, had nothing in it of distinctness excepting the words "A bas, a bas," too well understood by us; and it was followed by a rush of many heavy feet, and the noise of many hammers, against the inner door of the entrance. Swift as thought I raised the corner of my veil and tied a large knot in it, and then fled after the abbess, who had darted from the parlour, though I presently lost sight of her, finding myself in a narrow passage which led, one way to the cimetière, and another into the interior of the house. The passage was arched, or vaulted, and nearly dark, excepting where the light from the heavens, in which the moon, not far from the full, was riding amid flickered clouds. The silver beam rested on the grassy plot, where many a slight inequality in the surface of the ground marked the resting-places of our companions, recently added to the multitude of those who, during ages gone by, had lived and died in the convent.

At the moment that my eye first extended through the dark vista of the passage, and rested on the cross, another wild shriek burst upon my ear, and I beheld several of the terrified sisters rush through the burying-ground and throw themselves at the foot of the cross, clinging to the pedestal and pressing their faces upon

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the cold marble, while more than one man, following them from the house, endeavoured to drag them from their place of refuge; uttering at the same time such blasphemous jests as filled my whole soul with horror. The next moment the figure of a man darkened the passage; and he, probably seeing the outline of my form, came rapidly forward, and attempted to seize me: but I sprang by him and flew along the cloisters, by which (as I have before described) the cimetière was surrounded. There, drawing myself within the shade of one of the clustered pillars, I trusted that I was unobserved, though my heart beat with such violence that I could hardly distinguish the tumult within from that which was without: for the clamours of the frantic mob, and the reverberation of heavy strokes (for they were beating down the doors, and tearing up the images, in every part of the house) came rushing along the galleries, and sweeping round the cloisters, with a force so deafening and appalling as absolutely to deprive me, for some moments, of my senses. But a comparative stillness soon followed; when I was able to recollect myself again.

The ruffians who had attacked the terrified sisters at the foot of the cross had been called off to some other work of mischief; and there was, as it were, a pause within the cimetière;—and truly it was a solemn scene which I then beheld in the fitful light of the moon; as the clouds passed over the disk of the planet, at one moment revealing every object, at another shrouding all in a dubious light, in which only the white veils of the sisters who were clinging to the cross could be distinguished. I was in agonies for my Pauline, and ready to run all hazards in order that I might again rejoin her, and I was in the very act of leaving my place of refuge for this purpose, when suddenly several voices became distinct, as if proceeding from persons who had separated themselves from the mass of the people; and shortly afterward various figures of men appeared in the court, and one, advancing in the direction where I stood, discerned my figure, and extended a hand to seize me. Fear made me active, and I ran from him, crossing the court, and making a desperate plunge at a wooden door which, as I well knew, opened into a large wide outhouse, where the bier, the spades, and mattocks, and all other apparatus and instruments belonging to the

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burying-ground were always kept. The door of this gloomy place, being somewhat mouldy, gave way immediately: yet not so suddenly but that the individual who was pursuing me had obtained a full sight of my figure; and I was immediately aware that although I had pulled the door after me, he had opened it, and was actually in the dark chamber with me.

CHAPTER VIII.

DELIVERANCE.

Though I feared to stumble over the bier, yet I hastened onward, and presently saw a light through the chinks of something I took to be a door at the farther end. This my place of refuge was, in fact, a charnel-house, into which many mouldering bones of those who had died perhaps ages past had, from time to time, been thrown by the grave-digger. But, having reached the door at the farthest end, I was unable to move it, though it shook in my hand; and I was on the point of giving myself up to despair, not knowing what indignity might be offered me next by the man of whose near approach I was aware, when a voice, which I instantly knew to be that of an educated person, though the accent was foreign, uttered these words: "The lady of the knotted veil has no reason to fear the person who now addresses her."

"Heaven be praised!" I exclaimed; "which has sent me a deliverer in my hour of utmost need;" and I extended my hand to the stranger with a feeling of that entire confidence which I never had reason to think misplaced.

"Deliverer, lady!" he answered; "we must not exult too soon. How are we to get out of this place?"—and he struck the door before mentioned with such force that he made it shake violently, but it did not give way.

"This will not do, I fear," he said; "could we but gain the garden?"

I proposed that we should return, and endeavour to

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reach it in another direction, and I explained to him my anxiety for my dear Pauline.

"Be easy, madam," he replied; "she is safe:" but before he could add more, the glare as of a torch shone into the chamber, revealing the spades and mattocks, and heaps of remains, together with the bier in the centre of the apartment, of which the shade, accurately traced on the sandy pavement, reached the place on which we stood. By this same light I saw the person with whom I was so strangely associated, and had not a doubt that I was with the brother of poor Clarice; but he did not mention his sister, and I also refrained from the painful subject, although, had I at that moment been willing to enter upon it, I should not have had time; for he suddenly seized my hand, having observed a way to the left, in the farthest corner of the apartment, to which he drew me hastily, and had hardly brought me within its shade, when the persons who bore the torch entered by the entrance from the burying-ground.

Immediately within the archway in which we had taken refuge was a narrow winding stone staircase, up which we ran, and stood a moment to listen, with intense anxiety, to what was passing below. We heard many ruffian voices holding converse with each other, and mingling their vile discourse (for vile indeed it was in every respect) with many blasphemous expressions and disgusting jests.

"She is not here, Jansen," said one of these persons; "this is a charnel-house, and we run the chance of awakening the pestilence if we make a stir among these bones. If the bailiff desires her company he may look for her himself; that is, if the search must needs be carried on in this charnel-house."

"What say you," said another, "of throwing a torch under yon bier?—if it take fire it will burn out the bad air. Faugh! faugh! the place scents of death."

We heard no more, nor did we stay to ascertain whether the proposal of igniting the bier were assented to or not; but going softly up another round of the stairs, we presently found ourselves before a grated opening or window, beyond which were tall trees.

"I know where I am now," said my companion; "could we but escape through this window we should be in the forest. I am acquainted with all the environs of this place," he added; "I have examined them too

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often to be mistaken, though I never actually discovered this opening; it is not so high from the ground but that we might get out. Now is our moment; the wretches are gone from below;" and instantly grasping the bars, he succeeded, after several violent efforts, in dislodging some of them, throwing them out on the ground below, with a quantity of plaster and stone, and leaving an opening quite sufficient to permit us to force ourselves through: which opening being effected, "Now, lady," he said, "for courage and activity!" and so saying, he extended his body through the breach, and seized the bough of the nearest tree; the next moment he had swung himself to the ground, and stood looking up to me from below.

"The distance is small, lady," he said; and he directed me how to manage my escape through the aperture, promising to receive me in such a way as to break my fall. "You are light, lady; do not fear. Remember that, strange as your situation may appear to be, you are with one who feels himself bound to serve you with the last drop of his blood, and to treat you with all honour and reverence."

There was not time for me to reply; I had no doubt of the honour of the person in whom I was trusting; and though I can hardly now tell how it was effected, I found myself the next instant on the grass without the walls, supported by the brother of the lamented Clarice.

"One moment, lady," he said, "for taking breath, and then we must away;" and giving me his arm, while he grasped my hand, he dragged me on through bushes, brambles, and high grass, while every step removed us farther from the gloomy prison from which we had escaped. As to speaking, I had not breath for it; but he, who had been more accustomed to active life than I had been, was by no means so overpowered as I was. "Unfortunately," he said, "we have the water-course between us and the rendezvous of our friends; but there is a plank thrown over the torrent somewhat above, by which we must pass; in the mean time, we must keep in the shade of the bushes until we have crossed the water, lest we should be pursued. Should they discover the way by which we escaped, they will follow us, without question. But take courage, and, with the Divine help, we shall be out of their reach in a few minutes."

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Thus he comforted me, as he dragged me forward, giving me no time to look back, till we arrived at some little distance from the convent, at a place where a narrow plank was thrown over the water-course, and on the eastern side of the fir-crowned hill, which I have spoken of as being seen from my cell. The path which we had traversed was shaded with brambles and low bushes, and as it lay somewhat under the course of the brook, was so swampy as to soak my shoes: but these were minor evils, and I did not heed them; all my terror was of the pursuit of the bailiff or any of his people. The hill was green, and open on the other side of the rude bridge, and, a little way above this bridge, on the hill side, was a chapel of the Virgin, with an altar and image. This had originally been a beautiful little edifice, in the style of the florid Gothic, but it had been suffered of late years to fall into ruin, and to exhibit many manifestations of rapid decay.

The door of this chapel stood open, as we perceived when ascending the bank from where we had crossed the brook. We were not aware that there was any thing extraordinary in this appearance; indeed, we thought nothing of it, and were hastening past the chapel, when we were startled by the sound of a voice as from the other side of the bridge, but lower down the valley. We could not distinguish what was said; but as we dreaded lest our figures might attract attention if we ventured forward over the hill at that critical moment, in which the moon happened to be shining forth in full splendour, we turned into the chapel, intending to wait there until the clouds should pass over the disk of the planet. Was this disposition of the clouds at that moment the effect of accident? Is there any thing throughout the universe which befalls by chance? "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and yet not one of them shall fall to the ground without your heavenly Father."

My companion and I did not speak one word as we stood in this extraordinary situation. We were listening with deep attention to every sound; but there was a dread stillness, nor did there even proceed a murmur from the convent. It appeared afterward that the raging mob were at that crisis examining the dungeons and subterraneous chapel; and hence their clamours were deadened to those above the earth. The wind moaning in the fir-trees which crowned the hill; the

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rippling of the water-course, and the occasional cry of the night-owl, were the only sounds which disturbed the solemn stillness. But we saw the moon-beams resting quietly on the grass below the porch of the chapel, and were inclined to feel impatient, because in a night of clouds such as that was, there was not one to cast a veil over the face of the planet.

While hesitating whether we should wait a moment longer, or venture forward at all hazards, a low rumbling sound, as beneath the earth, startled us both, so much so that I could scarcely restrain myself from shrieking; but I was enabled to command myself, though I trembled violently; nevertheless, we both, as with a spontaneous movement, drew closer within a recess in the wall which had probably been the shrine of some image. Another and another alarm, as proceeding from beneath the pavement of the sanctuary, followed from one instant to another. The idea of an earthquake so forcibly seized our minds that we attempted not to move, but stood fixed to the place where we were; a rattling, underground, tremulous noise then ensued, and at this critical moment the figure of the Virgin, as we could just discern by the moonlight, began to shake and tremble, and before I could examine the nature of my feelings, which were terrible beyond any thing I had ever before experienced, a trap-door opened in the floor, and a red glare proceeded from it and filled the whole chapel. If at that moment I thought that hell was yawning to swallow me up, it will not be a matter of astonishment to my reader, although, perhaps, that reader may be amazed when I inform him that, the next instant, the father Joachim ascended through the doorway, drawing after him, or rather bearing in his arms, a sister of the order of Misericorde, and that he was followed by the Jesuit in his habit of a monk, bearing a torch. Amazement now fixed both myself and my companion to our place, which was entirely in the shade within the niche in the wall; and thus we were neither seen nor suspected to be present.

The priests believed themselves to be alone; and while the Jesuit carefully closed the trap-door, Father Joachim, having laid the sister on the pavement, supposing her to be insensible, proceeded to draw the altar, which was of wood, over the door in the pavement; e Jesuit, while holding his lamp with one hand, en-

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deavouring to assist him with the other. All this was but the work of a moment, and in that moment the sister, who had nearly fainted, began to revive, and to raise herself from the pavement, which the father observing, grasped her arm, and drew her up with savage violence, saying, "You have cost us dear enough already; think not to escape us now; in the dungeons of the Inquisition there will be no appeal;" and he was proceeding, when she, as it were, slid through his arms upon her knees, wildly shrieking for mercy, and pleading rather for an instant death than the fate which was prepared for her.

I saw not her face, for it was shrouded by her veil; the light was also flickering and unsteady; but I thought of Agnace. Nor could I doubt but that this was the unhappy creature of whom the bishop had spoken, as of one never more doomed to see the light of day. I looked from her, and from the dreadful monks, to my own noble friend. I could feel, as he stood close to me, that he trembled, not indeed with fear, but impatience; but he was watching the moment when the unhappy nun should be set on her feet, at which instant he sprang from our hiding-place like a tiger from his lair, and seizing first the Jesuit, he dashed him to the ground, and by the same act extinguished the lamp, thus rendering it impossible for the priests to ascertain the number of their enemies. Dreadful and sounding was the fall of the Jesuit, for the earth beneath was hollow and vaulted. I know not whether he that then fell ever rose again. Our champion next assailed the confessor; I heard the sound of deadly strife; it was a terrible moment, but the victory was soon decided in favour of our friend; and I next beheld the father rushing through the doorway of the sanctuary, and flying down the bank towards the little bridge.

"Now! now!" cried Mr. Beaumont; "now is our moment. We must fly for our lives; there are more of these demons, no doubt, at hand. Heard we not voices but now issuing from the glen? Lady, follow me," he added; and putting his strong arm around the waist of the rescued sister, he urged her forward. Nor was she slow in understanding that her deliverance depended upon present exertion. She used her utmost efforts, feeble as she was; and thus he hurried her along the side of the hill, in the direction opposite to the convent, while I followed closely on his path.

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Having reached the north side of the hill, within the covert of the fir-trees, he called aloud. A cheering voice was instantly returned: "Is all well, Edward?" said the voice.

"All well," returned the other; "prepare the horses, William, and send help to meet us." We made a few steps farther before we were met by several sturdy mountaineers, who lifted up the trembling sister, and bore her swiftly away to the place of rendezvous, which was a shepherd's hut at the northern foot of the so often mentioned fir-crowned eminence.

Being thus left with Edward Beaumont (for I was not able to keep up with the peasants), he asked me anxiously who this poor persecuted female could possibly be. "It cannot be," he said, "surely it cannot be—my sister?"

"Oh! no," I answered. "No; impossible! Sweet Clarice sleeps in peace. Her end was a blessed one; but this, no doubt, is Agnace;" and I told him some little of what I had heard of this poor persecuted one.

He heaved a very deep sigh, and said, "All, no doubt, is right; but when informed by your friend this evening that I could never hope to see my Emily again on earth, it was an astounding blow. In time, I trust that I shall be enabled to thank my God on her behalf, without that admixture of natural sorrow which, at this time, even imbitters the delight I feel in having been thus enabled to rescue that poor victim of their barbarous policy."

The next moment I rushed into the arms of my beloved Pauline at the entrance of the shed, who, after a burst of joy on beholding me, was exceedingly anxious to learn how our party had been thus augmented. I told her in as few words as possible; and she seemed convinced, with me, that the poor sister who had been thus wonderfully rescued by the brother of the lamented Clarice could be no other than that Agnace of whom we had heard so many marvellous reports; but we had no lights in the shed, and there was not a moment for delay, for we were not at all secure from Father Joachim; nor had we any means of knowing what numbers he might have with him in the valley. The horses were ready, for our active friends had provided every thing necessary for our escape. Pauline, being first mounted was led away by her impatient cousin, that same William of whom she had more than once spoken to me.

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A demur had occurred how the rescued sister could be conveyed, as it was evident that she could not support herself on a horse; this was, however, soon settled by Mr. Beaumont, who caused her to be lifted behind him, his horse being powerful, while he bound her to himself with her veil. This was considered as only a temporary expedient, and yet it answered until such a distance from the place of danger had been gained as allowed opportunity for concerting some other plan. When all these arrangements were effected, we set out at full speed, and dashed down a steep ravine between two heights, little heeding the ruggedness of the road, so anxious were we to find ourselves at some distance from the scene of danger. Being at the bottom of this ravine, we stopped a few seconds to breathe our horses, when Pauline, drawing up to me, said, "Angelique, I cannot rest till I know who this poor sister is who has been thus wonderfully preserved; can she be that same Agnace of whom we have heard so much! or is she some other miserable victim of their barbarity!"

"Speak to her, madame," said Mr. Beaumont; "but I doubt whether she can answer you, for her head has fallen on my shoulder. She breathes, indeed, otherwise I should fear that she were a lifeless corpse. Ask her if she knew my Emily."

"Did you know Clarice, dear sister?" said Pauline.

She repeated the name in a low voice, and then added, "I should know her."

"Where," asked Pauline, "did you become acquainted with her?"

She made no answer.

"Was she with you in that dungeon?" resumed Pauline.

"Who can say?" replied the other; "who can tell what things were there?—the dead were there!"

"Where is Clarice now?" continued Pauline.

"They told me she was in the grave," she replied; "under the sod—in that cold place—did they not bury her?"

"What do they call you, sister?" asked Pauline. "Do they call you Agnace?"

"I have no name," she answered; "they made me nameless; they wiped away all memory of me."

She spoke low and inwardly, and then uttered a sort of wild shriek, clinging closer to Edward, and saying, in a scarcely audible whisper, "Oh! gentle sir, take me

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away, take me away; they are wanting me to confess —to tell them all. Bid them take off those veils, and those black robes; they are come to question me, and they will carry me to the Inquisitors."

"It is of no use," said Edward, turning to us; "these savages have bereft her of her reason; come on, we are losing time. Do you go before who are able; we are now about to ascend a difficult pass; I will follow as speedily as I can; wait for us, who are behind, on the summit of the pass."

This was done; Pauline and I, with William, went forward, and we had obtained the height some minutes before the rest of the party. From the edge of this pass we were to descend into a part of the country from whence the valley of St. Siffren could be no longer seen. William, who kept close to Pauline, informed her that their plan was to proceed by the shortest cut to the Lac de L——, by which they might pass immediately into a certain canton in the Swiss territories, and proceed without loss of time, and in a few hours, to the house of his father, M. d'Ivannois, who was in the rank of a farmer cultivating his own estate, and living, as we afterward found, in a state of the utmost comfort. He further informed her, that they proposed to stop at a cottage a little league from St. Siffren, where lived a peasant who was well known to his father; there they were to change their horses or mules, and the ladies were to be provided with clothes suited to the condition of women of middling rank in Sardinia. Here they were to take some refreshment, and then to proceed. William supposed that their journey from this cottage would take them nearly the whole of the next day, if not encroach on the night; but it seems that every precaution had been already taken to procure an easy passage for them from one country to the other. All this was told me by Pauline as we went slowly up the rugged pass; but having arrived at the summit, we stopped again, not only to wait for those who were coming after us, but to take one farewell look at the convent, in which we had left many dear to us; and oh! how left!

But how shall I describe the scene which burst upon us, when, having reached the highest summit of the pass, and emerged from the dark ravine where the pine-trees met and mingled their branches above our heads,

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we turned towards the valley. There stood the ancient towers of Misericorde, nearer to us, as a bird would fly, than we had any conception of. They seemed to fill the whole mouth of the pass, the hills on either side closing our view both to the right and to the left; but oh! horrible, affecting sight! vivid flames were rising up amid the dark masses of Gothic masonry; whether from one of the courts, or from the building itself, we could not ascertain; but the red light flickered over the long slanting roofs, and intercepted every part of the great tower of the chapel, excepting the cupola and cross which surmounted it. We shrieked with horror when we saw this, and my heart smote me, remembering what the ruffian had said in my hearing, respecting his purpose of throwing his torch under the bier. I felt that I ought, at all hazards, to have run down and endeavoured to prevent the mischief, and I wept without control, while Pauline broke out into the most vehement exclamations of grief. "Oh! scene of our sorrowful abode for many months," she exclaimed; "proud ancient towers, place of the graves of many holy sisters, and is this to be thy fate? Is thy end so sudden? so terrible? so overwhelming? And, oh! my mothers and sisters! to what are you now exposed? Oh, God! my God! in wrath remember mercy." William would have spoken comfort to her, but she wrung her hands, and seemed as if she would have sprung from her horse and run back to the burning convent.

Surely I never beheld an agony of grief more touching, more affecting: but she was silent in a moment. I did not immediately perceive the cause. It was one hour before midnight, and the convent clock was tolling eleven. It tolled from the tower, whose base was already wreathed in flame. It was never perhaps to sound again: but its motion was not precipitated; its tone was full and solemn as aforetime, and we listened till the last deep note had died away along the valley. Then followed a new burst of anguish from Pauline, and fresh floods of tears from me.

It was vain for William, whose features as yet I had never seen, to strive to console his lovely cousin. All he could do was to divert her attention, and to bring upon himself a charge of hardness of heart, even at the moment in which he was risking so much for her sake; but he was probably aware that this charge would soon

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be retracted, for he betrayed no symptom whatever of ruffled feelings, but led our horses farther along the pass, notwithstanding our entreaties to be permitted to look one moment more on the object of our painful regret. There we were speedily joined by the rest of the party. It seems that our suffering sister had fainted, and could be no longer held on the horse; and it had been decided that the peasants should hastily form a litter of boughs and trees, and so bear her along to the cottage before mentioned, thence to proceed as circumstances would permit. It was also decided that it would be best for William to go on with Pauline and me to the house of M. d'Ivannois.

We made several objections to this plan, saying that we would not leave our afflicted sister; but they were absolutely overruled by our new and kind masters; and two of the servants or peasants belonging to our party having joined us, we were led forward without further consultation,—William having promised to return immediately to meet the other party as soon as he had brought us into a place of security.

It was of no use for Pauline to murmur. She had met with her match (to use a somewhat vulgar phrase) in her young Swiss cousin, who was as lively as she was, and always ready to bring her to reason by a steady kindness, by which her over-excited feelings were gradually restored to the desirable equilibrium.

I will not say a vast deal respecting our journey from the time we left Mr. Beaumont till we arrived at our peaceful and happy place of refuge. Having ridden briskly for about an hour through very troublesome passes, we arrived at a cabin, where a good woman received us and helped us to change our dresses. This was a precaution necessary to be taken before daylight. The dresses provided for us were those of such peasants of the neighbourhood as might be supposed to be somewhat above the lowest degree: we left our dresses of the cloister behind us. Then, having taken some refreshment, we renewed our journey, and proceeded to the next small town; which we reached by daylight. We breakfasted, and continued our route without accident till we came to a small frontier town of Piedmont, being provided with proper passes by the care of William, who happened to be well acquainted with the commandant; and about six in the afternoon reached

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the border of the lake. This we crossed in a boat, or rather, I should say, navigated for some length, for we went far up towards the head of the lake, where it was narrowest, and where the mountains formed precipices on either side; and our course was so long that it was ten at night before we reached our destined landing-place.

In describing our extraordinary escape from the convent, I am sensible that a renewal of the agitating feelings which I felt, during that escape, has again affected my mind, and imparted itself to my pen: but having arrived in imagination, on that beautiful lake, far removed from all those horrors with which I had been surrounded for months past, I feel a renewal of that peace which I then experienced while seated in that boat, and gliding along those waves, with my Pauline by my side. Not that my contentment was perfect—for where is there perfect contentment on earth. I was anxious for my gallant deliverer, the brother of Clarice, and the poor sister under his care; and I was distressed for the friends I had left in the convent; and I then felt that they were all my friends whom I had known at St. Siffren. These were, at that time, the especial objects of mine and Pauline's anxiety; and more than this, we were excessively fatigued; yet our minds were in such tumult that we could not sleep, though the motion of the boat, the rippling sound of the water as it rushed by the little bark, and the soft breezes which blew over the lake, might have induced the repose which was so requisite.

"What would I give to know the name of that afflicted sister who was rescued by poor Clarice's brother!" said Pauline.

"It is Agnace, I cannot doubt," I answered; "Agnace, of whom we have heard so much: but in that case she must be fifty years of age at least."

"Well," said William, "were she sixty or a hundred, it would make no difference in Edward Beaumont's treatment of her. Oh, Pauline!" he added, "when you know more of Edward, you will see that religion such as his is more to be admired, more really excellent, than all the ostentatious pretensions of that abominable system of will-worship which you have abandoned."

"William," replied Pauline, "be not too sure of me. Have I yet said that I am convinced?"

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"No," he replied, "you will be careful how you do that, my fair cousin, inasmuch as a great deal may depend thereon: but, to be serious with you, Pauline, were I to wish you to receive a new religion, merely on hearsay, I should be no better than the rulers of that false system from which you have escaped. I do not pretend to tell you that the reformed churches are perfect—far from it—they are very defective, inasmuch as their rulers and members are sinful men: but this at least they have—that they do not deny the holy Scriptures to their people—they do not seal up the fountain of living waters; but rather invite their members to come and drink. There is no mystery, at least no systematic mystery, in their dealings; all with them is open; though, I fear, not always correct and fair. Nevertheless, under these visible churches the true believer may act and think for himself—study his Bible—shape his conduct according to its precepts, and have little else to fear than such scoffs and jeers as wicked men of every denomination have a delight in throwing upon the professors of religion."

I have not described William d'Ivannois. He was a fine young man, though not possessing a high degree of polish. His general manner was lively, and even playful. I was therefore the more astonished and pleased at the serious manner in which he pressed upon us, not merely his own mode of thinking, but a calm and deep inquiry into truth by a regular study of Scripture, casting aside all references to the traditions and commandments of men; alleging, that at best these must be very uncertain guides, inasmuch as men's passions may dictate any thing which they judged to be advantageous to themselves or likely to promote their own interests.

We granted all this; but alleged, "that although man might err, we had been taught to think the church infallible and incapable of error."

"What is the church?" asked William; "for assuredly our controversy turns on this inquiry."

"I see that it does so," replied Pauline, "and I remember that this was the precise point upon which the argument between Clarice and the bishop rested; namely, What is the church?"

"There is a distinction," said William, "made in the holy Scriptures, between *the* church and *a* church. Every established form of worship, professing the name

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of Christian, throughout the world, whether faithful or corrupt, may be called *a* church—of such there are multitudes; and these together form what we call the universal visible church, of which the character is imperfection, inasmuch as its members are mixed, the evil with the good, the professor with the true believer. But within this visible church, within this outer court, which I fear is but too often little better than a den of thieves, are contained, as far as we are permitted to see, all those members of the invisible church as at any given period are passing through time to eternity, which can be no otherwise manifested to their fellow-creatures but by their transit through the visible church. These members of the visible church, under the present dispensation, which is spiritual, are in such condition, having no visible head, that they cannot be numbered; neither are they known, having no external beauty or perfection. Neither have they any authority in the congregation of men; for they know that this is not their home, nor the period of the reign of their Master, Christ: but they look forward to the glorious moment of the return of their Lord—when they shall be as the stones of his crown, and as the rows of jewels which adorn his cheeks. For," added our young and enlightened teacher, all sparkling with animation, "the promises to the universal church above are rich and magnificent beyond all which the natural man can conceive, and are made evident by every beautiful figure which the natural world can supply. Such as glorious human beauty, health, renown, purity, incorruptibility, gorgeous apparel, perfumes, precious stones, magnificent scenery, exquisite fruits, groves of spice, crowns, and sceptres, and thrones, running brooks, cloudless skies, and eternal light and life; and, in short, all that is lovely, all that is desirable, all that is pure and perfect. But ambitious men (such are and ever have been the rulers of the Roman Catholic church), in order to establish their own rule, have appropriated to their own ecclesiastical hierarchy all the promises which belong to the church triumphant when manifested, as it shall be, in glory and dominion in the latter days,—namely, at the period of the return of the Lord; and they have employed all the natural emblems which were prepared by the omnipotent Creator, from the beginning of time, for the exhibition of spiritual truths, and thus used by

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the inspired writers, to adorn their pageantries and confirm their power. And they have done this so well that they have deceived thousands and tens of thousands; though I trust that within their tents and courts and gardens of imagery there have been many of the hidden ones of our Lord. For we cannot believe that all are lost to God who, during the long ages of past darkness, were counted among the members of the Roman Catholic church."

There was much in all this to render us very thoughtful; but nothing touched us more than the hope held out to us that all our former companions, and those who had walked before them in the way of error, were not lost. This expression of William brought us to tears. We wept abundantly, and our hearts were relieved by these tears. The young man was evidently affected also, for he instantly changed the discourse, and resumed, without an effort, his usual airiness of manner.

How lovely was the gradual approach of evening! The stillness of the air, the balmy fragrance of the breeze, and the advance of the shadows up the sides of the mountains, and the golden line of declining day retreating before them, till at length the snowy heights, seen at a distance, assumed that pale cold hue which every lover of natural phenomena must have observed on the superior heights in mountainous countries, a few moments before the veil of night renders all things indistinct, unless it may be the bare outline of the hills upon the clear expanse of the heavens. Then followed a glorious night. The moon arose, her horn being nearly filled, and having cleared herself of the mountain above which she first appeared, we observed her image on the water, with a long ray of her soft light forming a line across the lake.

"Oh, that moon!" said Pauline, "on what a scene did it shed its light last night! What would I give to know what is now passing at St. Siffren! Poor Mère Genefride! where is she now? Where are la Mère Aymée and the sisters? Oh, Angelique! happy, in comparison with them, are those that sleep in the dust!"

"That is," said William, "if they have been deceived, and not been themselves deceivers. In the latter case, I would not willingly exchange with the dead."

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It was eleven by the night when we arrived at the little village where we were to land. There was a small custom-house by the edge of the lake, where William was well known, and near to this a little inn, to which he brought us. Here he found two servants of his father, with a sort of carriage used for the mountains, drawn by four mules. Within this he placed us, and recommending us to the care of the servants, he took his leave, meaning to repass the lake that very night, in order to join the party which he had left behind. We knew not how to thank him for all his kindness; but the tears which we could not repress, when we expressed our hope that all who had set out together from St. Siffren might soon meet in perfect safety, were more to him than any words we could have used. The place of our destination was what our old driver called "an hour from the lake," and the road, he informed us, was as safe and smooth as the palm of a lady's hand.

Pauline smiled at the comparison, and said that ladies' hands were sometimes treacherous—not so, she hoped, the road. However, we found no great difficulties, although, when about a third of our way, we entered such a gorge as I could hardly have conceived. It gaped upon us like the mouth of some horrid monster; and although we were continually ascending, we seemed every moment to be more deeply involved in darkness. We could not ascertain by the eye the height of the rocks on either side of us, though we could discern the outline made by their jagged summits on the sky. We were also aware that there was a torrent on one side of us, by the dashing sound which it made; and we passed two or three cascades, the white foam of which showed distinctly amid the mass of dark foliage which shaded the place of their fall. At length the gorge opened, and we entered a valley of a circular form, covered with an uncommonly fine greensward, having neither hedges nor fences, and being scattered with cottages—all of that singularly beautiful description denominated "Suisse."

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CHAPTER IX.

THE REFUGE.

Having passed several of these, our driver pointed out to us, with no small glee, his master's house, standing high on the bank, and being of dimensions and proportions vastly superior to those we had already seen. Near it were many barns and outhouses, indicating the prosperous farmer, and huge stacks of wood, neatly arranged for winter fuel. Instead of one gallery of carved wood, as we had seen in the cottages we had passed, there were two around this house, the highest being near the overhanging roof; and whereas, in most countries, the gable-ends of a house are on each side, in this mansion they were to the back and front. A long line of small casement-windows opened on each gallery, the lights shining from within as if many of the panes of glass were coloured; the panes in the higher story were circular or octagon, fitting curiously into each other; and on a beam over the lower range of windows was a motto written in German, and in letters of gold. The whole of the house was composed of timber, which was quite bright and polished, and of the hue of oak. Behind the house was a garden, encompassed with palisades.

It is not to be supposed that I observed all these particulars on my first approach, and by moonlight, though I mention them in this place in order to help the imagination of my reader to accompany me as I go. It was a steep pull for the mules to bring us up from the road to the front of the house. Nor was the noise of our approach lost upon the inmates; for they had been already warned of our speedy arrival by a peasant who had gone forward from the cottage where we had laid aside our nuns' habits during the night. The carriage, therefore, had scarcely stopped, before a most venerable pair appeared in the front of the house, ready to receive us to their arms and hearts, not making any apparent difference between Pauline and me. There was a mo-

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mentary demur at the non-appearance of William, which was speedily explained by the servant, who said that his young master gave his love to his mother, and hoped to be with her by the next day. There was nothing then to be done but to take us into the house.

We ascended to the first floor by means of the stairs without, and were introduced into a sort of apartment which I could not easily designate. It was floored and wainscoted with oak much imbrowned by time. It had a sort of tent-like bed, in an alcove at one end, and a long board for dining, with benches, at the other. There was a stove in the apartment, covered with Dutch tiles, whereon several dishes were set to be kept warm for our supper, and, in a corner of the room, a most superb clock, in a very high case. All this I saw with one glance, regarding these objects as signs of comfort and opulence: for it would have been excessively painful for me to come, under the circumstances I then was, into any place where I thought that my maintenance might be an inconvenience.

But the excellent lady was herself taking the dishes from the stove, and setting them on the table for us.

"You must be hungry, dear young ladies," she said; "sup, my children, and then to rest. We have been hoping you might come for several days; but one of the boys came forward this morning, to tell us you were on the road."

From this young man it seems that she had heard the particulars of our escape from St. Siffren, with the extraordinary account of the recaptured sister. Being thus kindly invited, we ate a little, but were so overpowered with sleep, that we could give no account of ourselves. However, the good old gentleman would not let his wife take us away, till we had knelt together, and united in a prayer of thankfulness for our deliverance: but the prayer was short, and soon after it was concluded we were both in a deep sleep, in a delightful upper room where were two beds. About four in the morning, I was awakened for an instant, by a noise, as I thought, under the window. I started up in bed for a moment, but the sweet conviction that I was in a place of safety coming to my mind, I lay down and slept again; nor did I awake a second time till the rays of the mid-day sun were beaming through the curtains.

Madame d'Ivannois was standing by my bed when I

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opened my eyes, and she had brought with her changes of apparel for us both.

"My love," she said, addressing me with a smiling countenance, "it is late; give God thanks for your long repose. You look another thing than when you arrived last night:" and then, smiling, she added, "here is company come, and desiring to see you, my daughters:—good friends, who are anxious for your welfare."

"What!" exclaimed Pauline and I, in one breath, "are our friends arrived, and our poor sister with them? Are they all safe, all well?"

In reply, she informed us that they had all appeared early in the morning, and that they had brought with them a doctor from the small town on the edge of the lake; that the rest of the party were quite well; but that the poor lady had been so exhausted that, from the time she had been laid on the litter, she had never spoken distinctly, or given any account of herself; that she had been placed in bed the moment she arrived, and was so low that they had feared for a short time she could not be brought about. "Nevertheless," she added, "our last reports from her room are very cheering; our good doctor tells us that her pulse is amended, and that she has slept calmly for the last hour."

"May I see her?" asked Pauline, hastening to dress herself.

"No," replied Madame d'Ivannois; "she must not be disturbed on any account. And her room is nearly dark: she seems to be so wonderfully oppressed with light, that we all believe that she has long been confined in total obscurity: we have therefore shaded her room."

"What is she like?" we asked; "is she young or old?"

"Poor creature!" replied madame; "I cannot say that I could tell you. I was too busy to get her into bed to look much at her face; but assuredly she is not an old woman."

"If it is Agnace," said Pauline, "she has been confined at least thirty years, and must be near fifty."

Madame d'Ivannois shuddered, and replied, "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. Poor creature! think what she must have suffered! Thirty years, did you say? The Lord help her! But I trust that her sorrows are now at an end. She has fought the good fight;

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and he who is with her has proved himself stronger than he who is against her."

"How do you know, Madame d'Ivannois," said Pauline, "that she has fought a good fight? Do you know the cause of her long confinement?"

"I can guess it," replied Madame d'Ivannois, "without possessing much more discernment than another. For this morning, when I, with a kind neighbour who had run over to offer her services as a nurse, undressed the poor creature to put her in bed, what did we find concealed about her person, in a most curious sort, but a very small Bible—well worn, I promise you. It was pitiable to see it bound upon her poor leg. She was quite insensible when we took it off, but I put it by her in the bed; and I know not whether she is even now conscious that she has it. Ah! my children, this poor suffering one, whom you have been the means, under God, of bringing into a place of safety, is one beloved of God, there can be no question."

We were very anxious to be permitted to see her, being full of amazement to think how she possibly could have procured a Bible in the convent; but Madame d'Ivannois was resolved that there should be no chance of disturbing or exciting her; and as soon as we were dressed, she brought us down into the room where we had supped. There we found the venerable father of the family, with his son, and the noble and admirable youth who, with the Divine permission, had been the means of my deliverance. I had never seen his face before, and I was instantly struck, and strongly affected, by his likeness to the beautiful and unfortunate Clarice. Indeed, I was so much affected by this circumstance that, when I advanced to thank him for all he had done for me, I burst into tears. I never before had been so strangely affected. I had not dared to offer him my hand, but he took it; and seeing that I trembled violently, he seated me in a chair; and taking one near to me, "Dear lady," he said, "if I have been the happy means of rescuing you from temporal evils (but what are these light afflictions which endure but for a moment in comparison with the evils of an eternal and inscrutable state of existence for eternity), O that I might also be the happy means, unworthy as I am, of rescuing you from the deadly spiritual thraldom in which you have hitherto been held. Will you, lady, for my sake"—and he

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blushed as he spoke, and caught himself up—"for the sake of Him to whom every knee should bow, accept this precious volume?" And he placed a small silver-clasped Bible in my hand. "And will you study it, asking the illumination of the Lord the Spirit, and resolving, with the Divine help, to receive all that is therein taught, and to reject all objects of faith devised by man?"

He had placed the book in my hand. I had long desired to possess a Bible, and he seemed entirely satisfied with the manner in which I received it; for he arose, and turned away from me with such a glow of holy joy on his countenance as no sense of imaginary merit could ever impart even to the finest features. M. d'Ivannois was summoning us to join with him in his morning devotions. I had shrunk from the place given me by Mr. Beaumont to the side of Pauline. Nor could we help contrasting the beautiful simplicity of this service with the dull, monotonous, and excruciating wearisomeness of our morning services at St. Siffren. Neither can you, my gentle reader, who have been in the habit of hearing the Scriptures read from infancy, conceive the effect of this first reading of the Bible in my ears. It was the first chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians which had been selected on this occasion; nor can I describe the manner in which the truths there exhibited seized upon my mind. The doctrines of election and adoption by grace were so entirely new to me, so consoling, so delightful, that I felt I must have misunderstood the sacred text, and that it was wholly impossible that any individual of the corrupt race of Adam could have been chosen before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blame before the Father in love, being predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. All this, as I before said, was too delightful, too consoling; and yet every word that M. d'Ivannois had read was in my Bible, and I might recur to it whenever I wished so to do.

It was a new and pleasing sight to me to see the happy family gathered round the long board, William being seated by Pauline, and myself by the venerable mother. Now happy people are often very unwise, especially after great and violent excitements. William laughed so heartily during the repast that one would have thought he had never experienced an anxious mo-

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ment. The old people were cheerful, and Pauline ready to laugh or cry, as occasion served; indeed, she seemed scarcely able to subdue her feelings, so far as to retain a convenient composure of manner; while Mr. Beaumont seemed, from time to time, to be entirely abstracted and occupied with painful reflections. It afterward appeared that he was thinking of his sister; for we had hardly breakfasted, before he requested a private interview with me and Pauline, in which he made us relate to him every thing we knew of his dear sister. It was an intense interest with which he listened. We had retired to a small arbour in the walled garden behind the house. He sat during the recital with his hand shading his eyes—men do not like to be seen to weep—but his breast heaved convulsively, as Pauline related, with much pathos, the scene in the subterraneous chapel; and the account of his sister's death seemed to affect him equally.

When we had told all we knew, he started from his seat, and taking one of each of our hands, he pressed them to his lips, saying, "It is all too little that ever I could do for you, excellent young ladies. May God bless you for your kindness to my poor, my lovely Emily! I will see you a few hours hence: I am not now fit for company;"—and he hastened from us, passing through the garden-door towards the mountains.

When we returned to the house, we found Madame d'Ivannois in the offices, attending to her household affairs. She informed us that the surgeon had just left the house, promising to return in the evening. We were anxious to know how he left our poor sister, and were rejoiced to hear that he had the best hopes for her; that she had frequent short sleeps; that she took nourishment, and was recruiting rapidly; but that she still spoke wildly, and gave no account of herself that could be made any thing of, only that when she found her Bible she seemed agitated, and attempted to hide it, being in excessive trouble, till those present informed her, with much presence of mind, that everybody had a Bible in that house, and that she had no need to be ashamed of hers. "Thank God!" she answered; and soon fell asleep. Pauline and I wept on hearing this anecdote, and begged to be permitted to see her; we were, however, put off till the next day. To this day therefore, I must hasten, only remarking that Mr. Beau-

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mont joined us at supper, having entirely recovered his composure; and why should he not, inasmuch as his heart was filled with love and gratitude on account of the noble steadfastness of his departed sister. We had a most interesting conversation, in which the true doctrines of Scripture were exhibited to us in the most clear and beautiful forms. Pauline and I did not, at that time, actually confess ourselves convinced, but our opposition to the truths pressed upon us became every instant more feeble; and William drew upon himself a reproof from Pauline, because he asserted that she disputed only for fashion's sake, and was in her heart, at that moment, no more a papist than he was. Thus passed our first happy day in the valleys of Switzerland. Beautiful Switzerland! how art thou associated in my mind with all that is precious to my heart, both as to time and to eternity!

The next morning, at breakfast, we were informed that our sister (as we called her, for want of another appellation) was so easy and composed that, if we would promise not to excite her, we should be permitted to see her. We were also informed that some light had been admitted, by her own desire, to her room; and that she had borne it well, and even had enjoyed it. We accordingly went up as soon as we had breakfasted, Madame d'Ivannois having taken her place by the bed to keep us, as she said, in good order. Pauline entered first, stepping softly, and I followed. She advanced to the centre of the room, where she could see the sister lying, and raised by pillows in her bed. There she stood a moment, and then suddenly turning round, flew out of the room, faintly crying, "Oh! merciful Heaven! impossible! impossible!"

I had no other idea but to follow my friend, for I was thoroughly terrified by her manner; but her motions were so rapid that she had already run round the gallery, and was descending the stairs on the other side of the house, before I caught sight of her again, though I followed her as swiftly as I could, and reached her at the instant that she sunk in a sort of swoon upon a bench, which was placed, according to the Swiss usage, in the front of the house. William approached to her at the same moment that I did, and was truly terrified to find that she was pale as death, and actually insensible. Seeing Mr. Beaumont at a short distance, we called to

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him, and water was procured, with other restoratives; and used with such success, that Pauline opened her eyes in a few minutes, and began to speak, but so incoherently that we could not make out what she would have said.

"Go, William, go," she at length exclaimed; "take your friend with you; leave me with Angelique, or my heart will burst. Go, for Heaven's sake, go; take Edward away, or I tell you I shall die;" and she looked so wildly that we were all thoroughly terrified. At first the young men resisted her wish that she should be left with me, but at length giving way to our united entreaties, they walked to a small distance, and stood regarding us with strong anxiety from thence.

"Oh! Angelique," exclaimed Pauline, "it is—it is—and yet it cannot be."

"What is and cannot be?" I asked.

"It is Clarice!—I am not mistaken," she answered; "it is indeed Clarice. Oh! gracious Heaven! what accursed illusion has been put upon us? Is the grave to give up its dead? Changed and altered, and wan and worn she is indeed; but still that pale and beautiful sister who is there is Clarice. It is no other; and her brother has saved her while he thought he was risking himself for a stranger. Indeed, indeed, I am not mistaken;" for I was arguing with her on the impossibility of her assertion being well grounded; "you may go up—satisfy yourself," she added; "but it is unnecessary; I am not mistaken; only what shall we do for him? Oh! Angelique, when I opened my eyes, and saw him standing before me, all anxiety lest any ill should have befallen me,—a stranger, and to him a foreigner,—I felt that I dared not suddenly disclose the overpowering tidings, and hence my agitation. I verily thought that I should be suffocated, for I did not venture to utter the word, lest joy should be more overpowering than grief, and thus our delight in this wonderful dispensation of a kind Providence should be converted into pain unspeakable: for oh! Angelique, can one be insensible to the noble and exalted qualities of that brother of Clarice? and can there be any thing more touching than the wonderful arrangement by which he has been made the instrument of rescuing his sister, while thinking only that he was assisting some unfortunate one who had no other claim upon him than pure pity? But how are we to

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break these blessed tidings to him!" and she looked me earnestly in the face, as if I could solve her doubts. While we were still speaking, I heard my own name and that of Pauline repeated from the gallery above. Madame d'Ivannois was calling us, and Pauline requested me to obey the call, while she endeavoured to prepare our friend for the surprising intelligence which awaited him. I was aware that Pauline had more presence of mind than I had; indeed, she had given an example of this while reviving from her fainting. I was therefore glad to leave her to herself, and was anxious to see Clarice,—still almost dreading that my friend might possibly have deceived herself by an imaginary resemblance.

I accordingly hastened up the stairs, and meeting Madame d'Ivannois, she informed me that my afflicted friend was impatient to see me. She was adding more, when I ran by her, all impatience; yet was enabled to command myself when I entered the room, although my heart beat so violently as almost to deprive me of breath. The room was partially darkened: but there was quite sufficient light to afford me the assurance that Pauline had not been mistaken. It was indeed no other than Clarice whom I beheld, lying there on that pillow. Changed indeed she was, and fearfully so, since I had last seen her, being entirely without colour, and having lost much of that calm steadfastness of expression which had rendered her appearance in the subterraneous sanctuary something more than earthly. But the high excitement, and demand for fortitude of those scenes had passed away, and succeeding horrors, as I afterward found, had tended much to disturb her mind. This change in her appearance immediately struck me, and made me hesitate to advance: but my hesitation was serviceable, in giving her time to recollect me; for it must be observed that my features were not so well known to her as those of Pauline. My dress also being changed probably made some difference; for it was apparent that she did not recognise me at once: but by degrees, as she recovered her recollection of me, a lovely smile, together with a sweet suffusion of a delicate roseate hue, began to illuminate her hitherto pale and almost marble features; and extending her arms, she tried to raise herself, saying, "Angelique, sweet Sister Angelique."

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I instantly sprang forward, clasped her to my breast, and the next moment had sunk on my knees near to her pillow.

It was then, for the first time, as I afterward learned, that Clarice had been able to shed tears for many weeks: but she did weep copiously at that moment, and probably would have experienced extreme relief to her head from these tears, had I not imprudently, soon afterward, when I saw her more composed, thrown her mind back into a state of confusion, by asking her what I was to think of her supposed death and obsequies.

I perceived immediately that her manner became unsettled on my making this inquiry. She put her hand to her head and replied, "Then it was not a vision—not a dream; but a reality—a frightful reality. Then I did die—they told me so—and they showed me the funeral procession. I saw it, Angelique, from the window of that cell—I saw it all, and heard the funeral hymn—and you heard it too. It could not then have been a dream;" and she looked wildly upon me, and thus continued, "then perhaps all those things are not dreams, but realities. How can we know what is a vision and what is truth?"

I trembled beneath her earnest gaze as she put this question to me; but answered, I think, with some presence of mind, "Clarice, it appears to me that we have all lived hitherto in a sort of dream; our superiors have endeavoured to keep us from knowing and understanding the truth, until we are brought into such a state that we cannot judge and discern what is false from what is real: but our heavenly Father has now, in his infinite mercy, brought us into a place of safety, and in this sweet resting-place our minds, with the Divine blessing, will gradually recover from the shocks which they have received."

"God is love, Sister Angelique," she replied.

"Yes," I said, "and what present proof of his love can we have greater than this, that he should have provided a friend to deliver us and bring us here?"

"Yes," she said, "a friend! Who is that friend?"

I was afraid to tell her the whole truth: but I ventured to say, "A kind and excellent young gentleman, who pitied us because we were captives."

"Tell him, Sister Angelique, that I have prayed to God to blèss and rèward him: I can do no more to show my

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gratitude. But tell me," she added, growing wild again, "is Clarice dead?"

"Yes," I ventured to say, "we have done with Sister Clarice; that name is cancelled. You are now Emily Beaumont."

"Emily Beaumont!" she repeated; "then where is Edward? Did he send me a letter? or was that too a dream?"

"Should you know your brother," I asked, "were you to see him?"

She put her hand to her head again, which admonished me to break off the discourse as soon as possible, and then resumed, though more as if talking to herself than answering my question. "Edward Beaumont—what is he?—What was he?—a fair little boy. They lifted Emily up the side of the ship, and Edward stood below. Ah! Edward, that time is past—it never can return. Did they say a thousand years?"—and looking wildly at me, and seizing my hand, "Sister," she said, "make haste, do not be seen with me; madame is coming, and they will say that I am corrupting you."

Madame d'Ivannois, who had followed me into the room, now motioned me to withdraw. "The sight of you," she said, as she drew me to the door, "is so connected with past sufferings, that I must forbid these interviews at present: go, my child, leave the poor young creature to my care: all will be right by-and-by. God only knows what she may have endured. A little longer, and her intellects might have been irrecoverably destroyed."

I acquiesced in all which the worthy lady said: but still clinging to her and drawing her from the door into the gallery, I suddenly threw my arms round her neck and exclaimed, "Dear, dear Madame d'Ivannois, are you still ignorant of our extreme joy? Do you not yet know that in this poor sister we have found our Clarice? Mr. Beaumont has been the means of saving his sister, his own Emily." She was almost as strongly affected on hearing this as Pauline had been in discovering it first, and hastening down with me into the public room of the family, we there found Edward (by which name I shall now designate the brother of Clarice), Pauline, and William. Poor Edward, who could have thought of any one but him at that moment. I never saw any one so thoroughly overpowered by joy and gratitude. He was

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at one moment weeping like an infant, and then again breaking out in expressions of praise and thanksgiving; then indulging in conjectures how all these things could have been; and then again thanking us, to whom little thanks were due, for the assistance we had been able to give in the relief of his dear sister. But I despair of describing this scene. Indeed, I was not myself for many hours afterward; nor do I think that any thing like composure was restored to the family till after M. d'Ivannois had collected us to a solemn act of thanksgiving immediately before the evening meal.

It seems that my interview with Clarice had not, upon the whole, promoted her health. It was therefore agreed that we should not see her again till the Monday morning, and she was to enjoy perfect quiet during the whole of the next day, which was Sunday. That Sunday, namely, the first Sunday I ever spent in a Protestant family, can never be forgotten by me. Neither indeed ought it to be; for it was, I have reason to think, especially blessed to my soul. We accompanied the family to the little village church, and were present at the simple service; we attended the family worship in the morning, and in the afternoon we had a quiet walk among the valleys—enjoying much sweet discourse respecting the love of the Father, the freeness of the redemption procured by the Son, and that wonderful process of regeneration through the Lord the Spirit by which that image of God is renewed which was lost through the disobedience of Adam, and man again united to his Creator, and re-admitted to all the privileges of a son of God. These marvellous and delightful truths afforded the chief subjects of our discourse, or rather these were the truths which Edward and William endeavoured to impress on mine and Pauline's mind; while the excellent Monsieur d'Ivannois, who bore us company in our walk, failed not to add to what was advanced by our young instructers from the deep treasures of his own Christian experience.

In the evening of that same happy day, a letter arrived from Madame Verani,—my dear Madame Verani—giving us hopes of a speedy visit. I answered this letter the next morning, saying, how glad Madame d'Ivannois would be to see her, her husband, and little boy, and empowering Monsieur Verani to take up what remained of my property, if possible, and transmit it to a banker

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in Geneva, recommended by M. d'Ivannois; for I had already begun to consider that I must not always live at the expense of others. What had been paid into the funds of Notre Dame de Misericorde was gone, I knew, for ever: but this concerned me little; all I cared for was, that it might please God that as much of my patrimony might remain as would keep me in independence, however humble. As to the rest, I thank God that at that time I had no uneasiness as it regarded earthly things; but I was in much agitation respecting religion, and the vows which I had taken; and Pauline's mind was even more agitated than mine, inasmuch as it was already evident that William was anxious that she should become his companion for life. There was certainly very much in the character, appearance, situation, and connexions of this young man which removed every other obstacle to their union but that of religion, and especially the vow which she had so solemnly made of remaining unmarried through life. The question with her was, If I am led to see the false pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church, am I still bound by the oaths which it has required of me? This was a question which I could not answer; and as we had no one whom we thought it prudent to consult, we were led, I trust, to earnest prayer for direction: although it was some time before our prayers were so far answered that our minds were entirely set at rest.

But before I enter into the account of my second interview with my dear Clarice, I should say, that on the Monday morning one of the young peasants who had accompanied our friends to St. Siffren, and had remained behind, I forget on what account, arrived at M. d'Ivannois's, and gave us an account of many things we desired to know.

He informed us that the fire, which had broken out where I apprehended, had burnt many of the out-houses, and had raged furiously when it reached the pile of wood for winter fuel, but had not destroyed the main building, although that had suffered cruelly from the mob, by whom it was entirely despoiled, the images and pictures defaced, the cornices torn down, the pavements uprooted, and, in short, the whole building left but an empty shell. As to the superieure and the sisters, he could tell us little of them. He had heard them shriek, and had seen them run from one part of the building to

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another; but he believed that they had all escaped in various directions, with the exception of one, whose remains had been found in the cimetière on the morning following the calamity. "The body lay," said the young man, "at the foot of the cross, in the centre of the graves, and was that of an exceedingly old woman."

"Ah!" we exclaimed, "the poor Mère Aymée: she was perhaps the happiest of the whole household;" and we could not restrain our tears, in thinking of the calamities to which the rest of the sisters might even then be exposed.

But Madame d'Ivannois had promised us that we should see Clarice this day, and she assured us also that we should find her greatly amended, the rest which she had enjoyed having greatly restored her health, and the pure and perfect principles which had supported her through many scenes, such as I tremble to think of, not having been inefficient in restoring that composure of mind for which she had before been so remarkable. But perhaps I am now expressing myself too much after the manner of the world, and attributing to causes such as we can comprehend those effects which were produced by the direct influences of the Lord the Spirit. For although I cannot agree with those excellent persons who, in the present day, have admitted the idea that palpable and visible miracles may yet be expected in the church under the existing dispensation, an expectation for which I have never yet been able to discover any grounds in Scripture; yet I think there is no question but that the indwelling operations of the Holy Spirit in the chosen of the Father are at this time almost altogether overlooked, and his healing, strengthening, and life-giving influences too often attributed to the ministry of man, or other visible second causes: but I must leave these reflections, not knowing whither they might carry me.

My next interview with Clarice, during which Pauline was present, was far more tranquil than my first had been; still, however, we feared to make her brother known to her, though his anxiety for the meeting was such that Madame d'Ivannois could not find arguments to protract it longer than the next Sunday, at which time she proposed to introduce him as one of her family.

Clarice was to be taken up after breakfast; and when Madame d'Ivannois, who had great delight in attending

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upon her, had dressed her and arranged her in the neatest order, she led her into the gallery, and there set her in an easy-chair, in view of the mountains seen across a valley such as few countries on earth besides Switzerland can show. Being thus seated, Madame d'Ivannois proposed to introduce her friends to her, and we, that is William and Edward, Pauline and I, were brought up. We had been entreated to be calm, and the sweet composure of the lovely sister, now much recovered, and beautiful even in that reduced and feeble state, was a perpetual admonition to us to command ourselves. Accordingly, when Pauline had embraced her we all sat down around her,—while Madame d'Ivannois endeavoured to lead the conversation to ordinary subjects.

Clarice replied to her remarks with deference and politeness; but presently recurred to those things which were uppermost in her mind, and, addressing her brother, on whom she had been looking intently, "It is one of my first duties, sir," she said, "as it is a particular pleasure to me, to express my sense of what I owe to you. You have been the means, under Almighty God, of saving me from horrors of which I dare not now even think, and in a manner so extraordinary, that I can look upon the circumstance by which I was thrown into your hands only as an immediate interference of Divine Providence."

Edward was evidently unable to answer her; for his eyes filled with tears, and he seemed to use a strong effort, as he stood leaning against the inner wall of the gallery, to prevent himself from rushing forward, and catching his dear and long-lost sister in his arms. Clarice, I saw, gazed steadily upon him in the mean time, and the colour rose in her cheeks. Madame d'Ivannois was about to speak, with a view to divert the attention of the sister from the brother, fearing a too sudden discovery of their mutual relationship; when Clarice interrupted, or rather prevented her, by saying, with a startling earnestness, "That young gentleman is your son, madame, is it not so?"

"The son of my affections, my love," returned Madame d'Ivannois.

"I thought," replied Clarice, "that once I heard—but perhaps it was a dream—when I was in that litter, that they called him Edward. But I have had many dreams, and I have also experienced many dream-like realities

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Indeed I have been trying for some days past to separate the real events of my life from those which are illusions. It cannot be," she added, and she rubbed her hand across her eyes, "that I am dreaming now, and that all this pleasant vision will pass away, as others of a very different nature have done: that would indeed be a refinement of cruelty." And she looked again towards her brother, a beautiful glow at the same time mantling in her cheeks, and said, "Kind sir, you will pardon me; but I am confused, troubled, uneasy. I have strange thoughts—you should not look so steadfastly at me;" and she turned to Madame d'Ivannois, saying, "Might he sit down by me? I fear that he will pass away, as other things have done. Surely he does not mean to deceive me."

It was evident now that the confusion of ideas under which she had laboured some days past was returning, attended with that which always accompanied it, namely, a sense of dread; and it was therefore necessary to manage her with great caution.

"Dear lady!" said Mr. Beaumont, as he obeyed her summons, and placed himself by her, though without daring to trust his voice any farther.

"May I touch your hand?" said Clarice. He gave her his hand; she laid it between her own for a moment, and then letting it go, she added, "No, it is not a phantom! Not such as I have seen or dreamed I saw—I know not which. But, dear Pauline," she added, "you may understand these things better than I do; did you not attend my obsequies?"

"I did attend that ceremony," replied Pauline, "which was supposed to be your obsequies. But all that may be explained—we shall understand it very soon; so think no more of it at present."

"I will not," she replied. "But tell me, Pauline, who is this? Am I mistaken? Can it possibly be that he is only deceiving me, and that he will pass away like those dim images of horror in that terrible place? Oh, Pauline, Pauline!" she added, throwing her arms round her, and clinging closely to her with a sort of convulsive grasp, "save me—save me from my own imaginations! They are terrible."

"No, no," said Pauline, "he will not pass away. Look at him—his eyes are full of tears! And see with what love he regards you."

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"I love him too," she answered; "he has been the means of saving me from a very horrible fate. But, Pauline, why do I remember him, and not remember him?"

"Because," replied Pauline, "you perhaps knew him when he was a child, and have not seen him since."

"He is not Edward," she exclaimed, drawing back from Pauline; "not my own Edward—my own dear brother? No, that cannot be!" and I never shall forget the ardent earnest look which she fixed upon him for one moment; but this fixed gaze of suspense endured only for that moment, for the next she was caught in the arms of her brother, and had sunk almost lifeless on his breast. We would have administered restoratives as soon as we could recover ourselves sufficiently to think of them; but the gentle soothings of the faithful brother had more effect in restoring sweet Clarice to herself than any cordial which we could have used; and I do not hesitate to say, that this last exhibition of the divine love towards her, in restoring her to the arms of her brother, had more effect in rendering back her strength and firmness of mind than all else besides which we could have done.

One of the most cruel principles of the Roman Catholic religion is that of requiring the sacrifice of all natural ties. It is certain, as our Saviour himself says, that religion frequently causes divisions in families. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came, not to send peace, but a sword." Matt. x. 34. Yet how does it contribute to these divisions? Not by any means through the abandonment of these natural ties by the child of God; but by the forcible ejectment of the believer from his unbelieving family, by which he is no longer permitted to partake of any social intercourse with those to whom he is attached by natural affinity. But the motto of the papist is, "Stand by, I am holier than thou;" and under this principle, he insists that every sentiment of natural affection shall be sacrificed, when the church commands it to be so.

And now the full tide of the long-repressed natural affections of Clarice seemed to flow towards her noble, her pious, her magnanimous brother. Not that she was cold or thankless to the rest of her friends. No, she was, on the contrary, all that was kind, grateful, tender, and, inasmuch as she continually referred every

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present enjoyment to the infinite bounty of her heavenly Father, it was not long before her mind recovered all its peace; and as her health was rapidly restored, under the Divine blessing on the care of Madame d'Ivannois, we soon had the pleasure to see her restored to a degree of bloom and beauty such as we had only known as attributed to her by report. It was much in her favour that she was still so young, being little more than twenty-one years of age when she was taken from St. Siffren. Nevertheless, had not her constitution been naturally uncommonly good, she could not have recovered so entirely as she did; insomuch, that after a year or two every trace of suffering had passed away from her delicate frame.

It was not, however, till some weeks after the scene related above, that she was permitted to give us the detail of what shall be related in the following pages.

CHAPTER X.

THE TRIALS OF CLARICE.

"I WILL not enter, my beloved friends," said Clarice, "on the transactions of the early part of my residence in the convent of Notre Dame de Misericorde; during which period I had experienced the common fate of favourites, having been at one time high in the favour of the superieure, and at another regarded with extreme coldness. I early lost the affections of poor Annunciata, indeed so early, and so immediately after I had taken the veil, that I was almost led to doubt whether I had ever possessed them; especially when that apparent affection suddenly turned into determined hatred, through a suspicion of my having betrayed the unhappy sister, in the affair of a few words from a friend being conveyed to her in a dried sweetmeat, with which circumstance I became acquainted through accident. The little transaction had been discovered by la Mère Ursule, and by her revealed to madame. It was in itself an affair which would soon have been overlooked, could the unhappy sister have forgotten the

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aspersion which it had thrown upon her character, hitherto supposed to be irreproachable.

"What the state of my mind as it regarded religion might have been, from the time of my profession till within the last twelve months, when the change took place of which I shall presently speak, I can hardly say. I think I may assert that my prevailing feeling was that of tedium and languor, and an increasing disgust at the various forms to which we were obliged to submit. Still I did not as yet entertain any doubts respecting the validity of these forms. I did not question but that all which the church exacted and taught was perfectly correct, and that all I could do would be only too little to save me from the horrors of purgatory, if not from everlasting destruction.

"In the mean time, I was an especial favourite with Father Joachim and la Mère Ursule; and it was in consequence of their opinion of me, that when Madame Barthelemis became a pensionnaire in the convent, and held out hopes that she would cast her lot with us, and not only pay what was required for herself, but also endow several more persons from her ample possessions, I was employed to attend to her, under the superintendence of la mère assistante. And when she was confined to her bed by a very severe attack of rheumatism, I was often left with her for hours together, with the strongest injunctions that I should do all that in me lay to promote the interests of holy mother church. Nor had I any other thought but to do what was required of me, till a circumstance occurred which overturned all my plans and intentions.

"Madame Barthelemis was of a description of persons with which I had never before happened to meet, and one which I did not then understand. She was a widow of a certain age, and one who had not given up all ideas of personal beauty. She was a woman of no natural strength of mind, and was in consequence liable to receive strong impressions, which were, however, easily effaced. She had been wonderfully taken with the pantomime and scenery of monastic life when she first came to us; and had not the rheumatism intervened, she probably might have taken the white veil before this fit of enthusiasm passed away. But this illness had the effect of wearying her with the dull and unnatural monotony of our lives; in consequence of

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which, she would no longer hearken to my arguments in favour of a cloistered life, but rather chose to entertain me with accounts of what she had herself seen in the gay world. One evening she produced a very small book, beautifully bound and gilt, saying, with a smile, that this volume had been the gift of a dear friend, who had required a promise from her that she would read it through before she took the irrevocable vows. 'But, alas! Sister Clarice,' she added, 'it is very long; and I know not that I ever read so much as it contains in all the course of my life.'

"I was anxious to see the interior of this volume, and requested her to give it into my hands. She smiled and said, 'No, Clarice, you must not read this book: it is an interdicted volume; its tendency is all contrary to mother church and her ceremonies, at least, so my friend would have me believe. For my part, I must take things for granted, for I cannot read all this;' and she closed the book, and threw it carelessly on the bed. Neither can it be doubted that I, who suspected that this was the Bible (a volume which I had never seen since I had left England), instantly took it up, and began to examine it with avidity.

"'Oh! dear Madame Barthelemis,' I said, 'give me this book; if you love me, give it me;' and I pleaded so vehemently that she consented, adding, with a strange light-heartedness, 'If this volume brings you into the Inquisition, Clarice, don't blame me.'

"I mentioned to the bishop, in the subterranean chapel, when you, my sisters Pauline and Angelique, as you have informed me, were present, what was the first passage in the sacred volume which opened my eyes, namely, that which was falsely quoted and placed as a motto under the image of the Virgin. My eyes, as I say, were forcibly opened by the change of the word in this quotation, and I, by the Divine influence, from that moment began as it were to 'see men as trees walking.' My attendance on Madame Barthelemis afforded me much opportunity of reading; neither did I waste these precious moments. I read incessantly, not heeding the giddy mirth of my companion, who was vastly amused at the eagerness with which, as she was pleased to say I sucked in the notions which would, sooner or later, make me a brand for the auto-da-fe: indeed I was well assured that self-love would prevent her from confess-

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ing the part she had had in placing this dangerous book in my hands; for would not every one have said, the sister Clarice could not have read this interdicted volume if Madame Barthelemis had not surreptitiously introduced it into the house?

"It would take far too much time to describe how this sacred book worked upon my mind, and how I was led to reject one popish error after another, till in a short time, an inconceivably short time (for the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow), I was a Protestant in heart, though still, alas! a veiled and cloistered nun. While Madame Barthelemis remained with us, I was permitted to be so much in her room that I escaped all remarks on my conduct, which already, no doubt, had begun to be affected by the alteration of my principles; and immediately on her departure I had a slight illness, a kind of fever, which confined me to my cell, and, no doubt, was in a degree occasioned by sorrow at parting with Madame Barthelemis (by which I lost the little liberty I had enjoyed), and apprehensions of the terrible contest which I anticipated.

"I take no credit whatever to myself for the change effected so suddenly in my mind by the reading of the Scriptures. It seems to me, upon reflection, as if I had been, from first to last, a mere passive instrument in the Divine hands; and I think so the more from this circumstance, that I never was able, through all my distressing and terrible trials, to form any other plan of conduct than that of yielding to the suggestions, or inspirations (might I presume to say) of the moment itself; and it was astonishing how I was ever supplied with strength from one instant to another, my mind being protected and my courage upheld until I was safe in the hands of real Christians. Oh! my God, how certain is the fulfilment of the promise, 'But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak: for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.' Matt. x. 19, 20. But, as I before said, I was confined for a short time to my cell by a fever, after Madame Barthelemis had left me, and the tears which I shed, together with the restraint so evident in my manner, were set down to the

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grief I felt in parting from my friend. That I should express so much sorrow in the separation from one who, after having resolved to take the vows, had returned to the world, was considered as a grievous sin, and la Mère Ursule assured me that it could not be repaired without certain penances, to which she trusted I should submit as soon as my health would permit me to leave my bed. What would the poor mother have felt or said, had she known that I actually at that time carried about me that sacred volume, which condemns all those forms and exercises so urgently commanded by her church. It was impossible, however, for me to affect illness much longer; but it was, at the same time, impossible for me to submit to the forms required of me as a religieuse. That these forms are in many instances idolatrous in the highest degree must be acknowledged, for after all the metaphysical subtleties and refinements upon words used by the Roman Catholic Church, it is manifest that such honour is paid to the Virgin and saints as is due only to God; and that when Mary is addressed as mediatrix, as she is in all the offices of the Virgin, the high prerogatives of our blessed Lord are violated, and his dignity as Mediator taken from him and given to another. Also, it must be evident, to all candid and enlightened minds, that the man who assumes the rule and government of a pretended universal church on earth, with the unearthly attribute of perfectibility, is guilty of a grievous heresy; inasmuch as the seat of the universal church is not on earth, and its head is Christ our Lord, and no mere man.

"It was during my confinement by illness to my cell that these truths were forcibly impressed upon my mind, and that I was led to see that it would avail me nothing to attempt to dissemble or conceal my change of sentiments: though I shrunk with terror from the dreadful contest which was before me, and for which I justly calculated that I was entirely unequal. But I was comforted and strengthened by the passage before mentioned, namely, the assurance of support when brought before the councils of men; which passage had presented itself many times to my eyes, as I turned over my little Bible.

"But my fever having left me, and no farther excuse for remaining in my room being within my command, I was told one morning, that after matins I must attend

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Father Joachim in the confessional. This message was brought me by the sister Annunciata; who, coming into my cell, and looking keenly at me, hinted pretty plainly that she thought I was pretending illness—that I had neglected my duties long enough—and that it was the pleasure of madame that, ill or well, I must henceforth go through the regular services appointed to the sisters. To all this I made no reply: but the sister having left me, I hastened to dress myself, considering all the time where I could hide my Bible. I had no place of safe concealment in my room: this I had well considered. Neither did I dare to hide it any longer about my person. At length the thought occurred to me that I would conceal it in the hollow of the pedestal of the great bronze image of Saint Augustin, which, as you may well remember, stood in a niche on the great stairs. My precious little Bible! if I can save thee, I thought, I shall not be without comfort, and they will never think of seeking for the lamb in the lion's keeping. I watched my opportunity, therefore, and succeeded in hiding the book; and being thus relieved of this present care, I went down to the confessional, in the chœur,* waiting till the father should appear in his place.

"I have often reflected on the curious state of my mind at that time. I was perfectly calm while waiting for the father; and if I thought with apprehension of any thing, it was of the safety of my precious book. For although I had taken the precaution of learning as many passages by heart as I possibly could, yet it would have been an affliction beyond all I then apprehended to lose my Bible.

"The father was not long before he arrived. I heard his step in the apartment, and presently he entered the confessional, calling me by name; and because I did not answer at the instant, exhorting me to commence, without loss of time, in order that I might speedily relieve my mind from all the sins, original, actual, mortal, or venial, which had undoubtedly accumulated since I had last met him in that place.

"To this I replied, 'Father, I have confessed my offences to God; and it has been revealed to me that I am forgiven through the blood of Christ our Lord, which

* The religieuse is not in the same apartment with the confessor; she speaks to him through the opening in the confessional.

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was shed for me; and, being washed in his blood, I cast my sins behind my back, and count it an unholy thing to turn to take them up again.'

"Father Joachim seemed so much overpowered by astonishment, that he gave no other proof of having heard me but a sort of indistinct groan, by which I was so little startled that I went boldly onward, speaking somewhat to this effect: 'A mighty and astonishing change has passed in my mind, my father,' I said, 'since last I knelt in this confessional. I then believed that it was in the power of the priest, as holding the place of Jesus Christ, to absolve the penitent, according to the Latin formula, Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis.* I believed that this sentence was no sooner pronounced by one appointed by the church, than all sins were pardoned to the penitent, and that a new grace was imparted to him, by which he recovered all that he had lost: for I had been taught that the priests had power to pardon sins, and that Jesus Christ, of whom they profess to be the vicars and the ministers, had given them that power. But it has since been communicated to me, and that not by flesh and blood, or human reasoning or human teaching, but by God himself, through the medium of his own Word, that the ministry of man is altogether inefficacious in the work of man's salvation; that it concerns only the making known that salvation to those who are the heirs of it; for that they who are Christ's were predestinated to glory before the foundation of the world, and being chosen by the Father, they were redeemed by the Son, and are sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Neither is it the work of man, but of God the Father, to make manifest to the soul of him that is saved the completeness of that work of salvation which was wrought for him through omnipotent wisdom. Nor ought the individual to whom this salvation has been revealed ever again to presume to lay any stress on his own works or deservings, or to place his confidence on an arm of flesh, or the mediation of a creature with like passions with himself.'

"The father hemmed and groaned several times as I proceeded; but I was carried, as it were, out of myself, and was led, I trust by no improper feeling, to lay open at once the very bottom of my thoughts as it regarded

* Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites.

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the pretensions of the apostate church; and were I to repeat what he said in reply to this, perhaps the most extraordinary confession to which he had ever lent an astonished ear, I should merely give utterance to some of the most terrible imprecations I had then ever heard. I remember one sentence only of all these anathemas, and it was to this effect—'Accursed be all those who, entering the flock in sheep's clothing, bite like the serpent, and through one, endeavour to destroy the whole flock. All this is owing to that apostate Marie Barthelemis: may her soul and body be tormented in fires that shall never be extinguished—may she be stifled in smoke and sulphur—may she be fried* in eternal flames; may she be ground under wheels of fire; may she be impaled on burning spits; may she endure eternal darkness, and be gnawed by never-dying worms:—and for you, daughter,' he added, 'what do you deserve? apostate, adulterous, infidel wretch as you are. How have you dared to listen to blasphemies, by which the majesty of the queen of heaven has been arraigned, her glory dimmed, and her prerogative insulted! Recant, I say! this instant recant; or by the holy mother of God I will deliver you to be tormented, until you shall wish that you had never entered into life, and shall curse the father who was the author of your existence.'

"To all this I made no reply: but I certainly trembled so excessively that I could hardly support myself.

"'You do not speak,' resumed the father; 'you do not utter a word.'

"'I have nothing to say, father,' I replied, 'but that Madame Barthelemis never attempted to interfere with my religious principles, nor ever, as far as I can recollect, said one word to me on these subjects.'

"The father, it seems, had by this time recovered a certain degree of composure; for he had taken his place again in the confessional, and was presenting his ear to me. His voice was also more under his command; nay, it was evident that he already regretted having broken out with so much violence; and his altered manner showed that he would gladly lead me so far to forget his harshness as to induce me to speak with confidence of the means by which my sentiments had been so suddenly changed. 'If Marie Barthelemis was not

* "Fricassez."—L'Histoire du Purgatoire de St. Patrice, p. 225

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the person who poisoned your principles, daughter, tell me who did. What means have been used to deprive you of your faith and hope?'

"'I have had no human teacher, father,' I answered, 'I have stated to you, what I believe, that I have been divinely taught, and that the truths which I have learned are never inculcated by flesh and blood.'

"'Let us reconsider what you have said,' returned the father; 'if I understood you rightly, you stated your belief in certain doctrines, which, if received, would infallibly open the door to every kind of horror and abomination.'

"'I do not understand you, father,' I replied.

"He then stated to me, that the principles to which he alluded were those of election and predestination, 'by which,' he added, 'the doctrine of good works would necessarily be thrown to the ground, and in consequence every licentiousness would be tolerated. Now,' asked he, 'can we believe that a good God can show favour to men who despise his holy law, or disregard those who spend themselves in the performance of holy works?'

"'I understand,' I replied, 'that those who are predestinated to life are predestinated also to good works.'

"'Indeed!' he answered; 'what is your authority for this assertion?'

"'Scripture,' I replied; at the same time repeating the words of Paul, 'for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' Eph. ii. 8–10.

"'Scripture!' he repeated; 'whence had you this knowledge of Scripture?'

"'I do not hesitate to say, father,' I answered, 'that I have been taught of God.'

"'Truly,' he replied, 'there has been something unaccountable in the manner in which you have been instructed: but may it not be,' he added, 'if your teacher has been a supernatural one, that you have mistaken the person? I have heard of diabolical inspirations as well as of divine ones: but let us return to our argument. Hear what holy mother church says respecting good works:—Jesus himself has said, our good works are

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of so great value before God, that we may merit by them the kingdom of heaven.'

"I was aware that this was a quotation from the Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites, and I answered, 'How then does our Lord say, that when we have done all we are unprofitable servants?'

"His reply was just what I expected, being taken from the same catechism:—'This deduction is not good, because the sense of these words of our Lord is, that although it may be true that we are obliged to do all the good that we can, even although we should not receive any reward; nevertheless God is so good a master, that he has deigned to engage his word, that if we serve him faithfully he will pay our services with an eternal recompense.'*

"'Still,' I replied, 'according to your own statement, father, the reward is due to the divine goodness, not to our own merits, and thus the opinions of all serious and humble persons must meet in the same point, namely, that salvation is a free gift, inasmuch as the acceptance of our best deeds is through the divine favour, and that the divine favour must needs have already been bestowed before these good works can be produced.'

"'Undoubtedly,' replied the father, 'the devil has inspired you with as much of his hellish wisdom as ever was uttered by the tongue of accursed heretic;' and again he broke out into unrestrained passion, concluding by asking me whether what I had revealed was to remain under the seal of confession, or whether I would choose that it should be told to madame? 'For you well know, daughter,' he added, 'that it is never permitted to the confessor to repeat what has been revealed to him in the confessional.'†

"'I consider,' I replied, 'that you are at liberty, my father, to repeat any thing you choose of what I have said to you. My principles must be known, sooner or later, to the whole household; and sooner or later I must make up my mind to all the consequences which I fear will ensue to me from my change of mind.'

"I remember little more of this conversation. I can only recollect that the father left me after having once again attempted to terrify me into submission by threats; and that immediately afterward I was called into the

* Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites. † *Ibid.*

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presence of madame, who was sitting in unusual state in her parlour, in her large chair, embossed with golden studs, having la Mère Ursule on one side of her and Sister Annunciata on the other. It would be tedious to repeat all that passed between me and the superieure during this conversation. Indeed it would not be possible: but never shall I forget the horror and astonishment expressed by the elder ladies, when I avowed my persuasion that there never could be any objects of faith but such as were revealed in Scripture; and that hence all traditions and commandments of men were to be rejected. There was no reasonable argument in any thing which either of them could allege in favour of these commands and traditions; nor, had they brought any such forward, would they have permitted me to answer them. On the contrary, they were so inflamed, that whenever I attempted to speak, they stopped my mouth,—bidding me to keep my blasphemous opinions to myself, for it was heresy even to hear them uttered. At length they proceeded to threatenings, and penances and fasts were the least of the evils with which they menaced me.

"During all this time, Sister Annunciata had not spoken one word; but had stood, with an unmoved solemnity, at the side of madame. At length, however, she availed herself of an instant of silence, and hinted that it would perhaps be as well to ask me by what means I had obtained the knowledge of those heretical arguments which I had brought forward to the father; and which I had, by my own account, derived from reading the holy Scripture, and wresting it to my own purposes.

"'It is impossible,' replied la Mère Ursule, 'that she can have procured a Bible in this house.'

"'Not by the aid of Madame Barthelemis?' asked Annunciata.

"'Let that be looked into,' said the superieure; 'we will have her person and her cell examined; we will not trust to her own word, though it might be well so far to ascertain her vaunted love of truth as to put the question to her;' and looking me full in the face, 'Clarice,' she said, 'I charge you, in the name of that Being whom you hold most sacred, tell me, have you obtained possession of the holy Scriptures?'

"I remember that on hearing this question I gave

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Annunciata a look which caused her to change her attitude, and in reply, I answered to the superieure, 'My word, revered mother, is as you have said, no longer to be depended upon by you; let it be as my sister Annunciata has said; let the examination be made, and if the holy volume is found in my possession, it will then appear, I trust, whence those principles are derived which have made me what I am.'

"Annunciata bit her lip, while her fine Italian eye flashed fire upon me; and I was at the same moment made aware, by that inward monitor which is sharper than a two-edged sword, that I had departed, in my last reply to madame, from that spirit of meekness which should be the distinguishing mark of a child of God. I felt myself in consequence constrained to fall on my knees before her to whom I had been wanting in respect, and was led to implore her pardon on that account, and further, to assure her that I would submit to her will in all things not forbidden by an authority higher than hers,—that I would serve the family as a menial,—that I would, God helping me, quietly endure any penance which she might enjoin, if she would relieve me from those forms to which, in my present state of mind, I could not submit.

"The poor lady was evidently affected as I knelt before her. I saw a tear glisten in her eye: it was a natural and gentle tear; but this soft and tender mood was as evanescent as the shadow of a cloud. The severe principles of the apostate church presently drove them back to their source, and I never but once afterward witnessed in this lady the exhibition of any thing like pity for her once beloved Clarice.

"'Do you attempt to make terms with me, wretched heretic!' she said; 'arise! be gone! and be assured that nothing will help you with me but the retraction of your accursed principles.' So speaking, she almost spurned me from her feet; directing those who were present to make a minute search in my apartment, and on my person, for the suspected volume. How truly thankful was I then that I had been led to conceal my little book; and, curious to say, the joy I felt in having so well succeeded in this precautionary measure seemed, in a strange degree, to counteract my feelings of terror and sense of disgrace: for after I had been roughly and rudely examined, I was left in my cell, la

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Mère Ursule having turned the key upon me, while a council was held how it would be best to act towards me.

"These circumstances took place at the time Sister Madeline was in her novitiate, and a few days before Sister Honorine took the black veil; and it was, probably on these and some other accounts, judged better that mild measures should be taken with me for the present, in the hope, no doubt, that it might never be necessary to unfold the disgraceful tale of my delinquency to the bishop. I was, therefore, to my great amazement, after having been shut up for some hours in my own room, set at liberty, with a severe charge to avoid all conversation with any of the sisters; and with a command to observe certain penances, in the superieure's private chapel, instead of the usual services in the chœur. I was somewhat puzzled at this unexpected mildness, but was, at the same time, admonished that I should be most carefully watched, and should also be subjected to very severe treatment, if it were found that I made any attempt to communicate with the sisters.

"Here was a relief which I did not expect, and I hope that I received it with gratitude and thanksgiving. I speedily ascertained, indeed, that I was closely observed, and the penances which were required of me were what I then thought very severe; for I was often commanded to watch before the image of the Virgin in the superieure's chapel during the greater part of the night. But, in the state my mind then was, I considered it such a relief to be excused from the superstitious services in the chœur, and to be left to my own reflections, and to that divine communion to which I had been lately admitted, through the blessing of the Lord the Spirit on the divine Word, that I was not only content, but even happy. And could I have dared to spend those solitary hours in reading the sacred volume, I should have had great delight; but I felt that I should be running too great a risk, in bringing my treasure from its hiding-place, at a moment when suspicion was so strongly excited against me.

"Such was my situation when Sister Madeline laid aside her secular habits, nor was it changed till Honorine took the black veil. But immediately after that last event—I think it was the next day—la Mère Ursule,

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coming to me, delivered the commands of the superieure, that I should attend the confessional, and afterward assist at the usual services in the chœur: thus taking it for granted, with a degree of art highly consistent with the spirit of the Roman Catholic church, that the penances which had been enjoined had done the work for which they were intended. This command threw me into the greater confusion, because I was not prepared for it, neither had I made up my mind how far I could accommodate my conduct to the rules of the house, and how far it was incumbent on me, with my new principles, to separate myself from their forms.

"How gladly would I, at that time, have made my escape from the establishment, had it been practicable in any way. But it was not so: I was confined within bars of iron, and I was closely watched. However, to proceed with facts. When this message was delivered to me, I answered, 'You are aware, respected mother, that my principles are such that I can no longer accommodate myself to the obedience required by the church in many particulars. All places are indeed alike to me as a believer, God being present everywhere, and his ear open to me in all places; "for if I ascend up into heaven he is there; if I make my bed in hell, he is there also; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Psalm cxxxix. 8–10. Hence, when kneeling in the chœur, I may address my prayers to him as purely and sincerely as under the open canopy of heaven, and therefore I cannot refuse my obedience to the superieure, in giving my attendance in the church: but let it be understood that I will not open my lips to join in any service which is not approved by Scripture. Understand me, mother,' I added, interrupting her—for she would have spoken, 'that I have been led, I trust divinely, to consider, that however my opinions, as it regards religion, may be changed, yet as long as madame is the superieure of the house which protects me, I am bound to obey her, in all things consistent with my higher duties and blessed privileges; and that as I consider all forms which do not partake of idolatrous services to be unimportant, I am ready to submit to her pleasure as it regards them.'

"La Mère Ursule was, as you may remember, slightly deaf, at least she frequently, under that pretence, caused

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the sisters to repeat any thing which she did not entirely approve; and accordingly on this occasion she caused me to repeat what I had said, taking up the word 'idolatrous' only in her reply, and asking me what I meant by it?

"'This is what I mean,' I answered, 'that as the Scriptures declare that there is one only name under heaven by which man can be saved, I am led to see that all services addressed to any other than God are idolatrous; and that hence, with the Almighty helping me, as he assuredly will, I will endure death itself, rather than pay that reverence to any created being, or to any symbol of whatever description, which is due to the Saviour only.'

"At this declaration, la Mère Ursule seemed to lose all self-command; for she raised her voice, and poured upon me a torrent of expletives, such as are not unseldom in the mouth of a zealous Catholic: and the words—accursed one, blasphemous heretic, imp of hell, spoken somewhat too loudly, brought in the sister Annunciata.

"'Mother,' she said, 'the ears of the holy sisters should not be assailed with a controversy such as this, which I perceive you are carrying on with this—' and here she hesitated, as if at a loss for an appellative by which to designate me: then closing the door of the cell behind her, she inquired what had passed, and was told that I had blasphemously pronounced all services to be idolatrous which were addressed to any other name but that of the Son of Mary.

"'Your presence is required by the superieure, mother,' replied Annunciata, 'leave me with this apostate—I will deal with her; and remember that this shameful strife ought never to be exhibited before those members of the establishment who know not that such things are even in the very bosom of the church, and are still the faithful and confiding children of our holy Mother.'

"La Mère Ursule instantly quitted the cell, muttering something, with closed teeth and open lips, respecting the provocation which such as I was could not but give to a faithful and zealous daughter of the church; and the next moment I found myself alone with one who had once been to me as the dearest of dear friends. But there she stood drawn up, and cold and white as a marble Madonna; and if there were any expression in her countenance, it was that of scorn mingled with

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aversion. Nevertheless, as I recollected her former tender love, I was affected, and said, 'Dear sister, you will not, I am convinced, promote any measures of severity towards me which can be avoided. Remember how we once loved each other, and that we were once as real sisters. I lead for me, that I may be heard before I am condemned; and let me at least hope, even should the worst befall me that man can do against me, that I may possess your pity.'

"Insensibly, as I had spoken, I had drawn towards her, but she stepped back as I approached, and with an expression of consummate contempt, which slightly elevated her beautiful lip—for ah! she was superlatively beautiful in her external form—she motioned with her hand to me to stand back, coolly requiring of me to say what the subject of my discourse with la Mère Ursule had been.

"'You may easily surmise it, Annunciata,' I replied.

"'I am to understand, then, Clarice,' she said, 'that the penances enjoined by the church have not produced the effect which we charitably hoped and expected?'

"'If you expected,' I answered, 'that solitude and long fasting—'

"'And many prayers,' she added.

"'And many prayers,' I repeated '(for I thank God that I have been led to lift up my heart continually in prayer), should tend to restore my mind to that state in which it was when I took the vows, I must freely and candidly confess, that they have utterly failed as regards any such purpose; and that reflection and meditation have only tended to prove more and more to my mind, that Scripture is the only fountain of truth, and that all traditions of men tend only to darken first, and finally to extinguish, the light of truth.'

"Annunciata replied, 'You then consider yourself, Clarice, to be wiser than all the saints and martyrs, apostles and holy men, who have gone before you?'

"'Let us reason consistently, Sister Annunciata,' I said: 'observe that I build no argument on my own judgment; but I maintain that the revealed Word of God ought to be the rule of our lives, and that what is not found therein ought not to be required of an individual, either as an article of faith or principle of duty. For thus says the inspired writer,—This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with

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their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'

"'You seem,' replied Annunciata, 'to be singularly well instructed in these Scriptures; permit me to ask you, who profess such a love of the truth, how you have happened to obtain such a knowledge of those writings?'

"'I do not hesitate to repeat what I have before said,' I answered, 'namely, that I have been divinely taught.'

"'Miraculously so?' resumed Annunciata, 'or by a divine light shed upon the text in the act of reading? Permit me to ask you in what sense I am to take this assertion, namely, that you have been divinely taught?'

"I was aware that, should I answer that the divine light which had shone upon my mind had operated entirely without visible means, I should utter a falsehood. I was therefore somewhat at a loss what to answer, and endeavoured to evade a direct reply by saying, that the hearts of all men were in the hands of God, and that he could impart that which he pleases to any individual, without availing himself of the ministry of man.

"'You allow, then, of miracles?' she asked.

"'I believe that a superhuman work,' I answered, 'is constantly going on in the hearts of men, by which those who were dead in sin are made alive unto God.'

"'No one will question that,' she returned, 'but I understood that you questioned the power of the church to perform visible miracles.'

"'I am inclined to think,' I replied, 'that during the present dark state of the visible churches, it does not please God to manifest any miraculous works in the natural world.'

"'And yet,' returned Annunciata, 'you pretend not only to have received the knowledge of spiritual things through the divine influences, but also of natural things. For although there may be, and are, feelings and affections which are altogether spiritual, and which might be imparted to a solitary ascetic, in the depths of a howling wilderness, with little aid of man's teaching, yet it is obvious that the letter of Scripture is a natural thing, incapable of being acquired by human industry; and consequently, if you, Clarice, have obtained the knowledge

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of that letter without human aid, it is a miracle, and one surpassing any to which our holy mother church has ever asserted her right.'

"'To all this I answered, 'Permit me, my sister, to put question for question. Wherefore do you suppose that I must have seen a Bible lately? Do you think that by Scripture only I could have been instructed in arguments such as I have used?' And then I added, with a sudden gush of tenderness which I could not repress, 'Oh, Annunciata! friend of former years! would that you would permit me to open my whole heart to you, and to plead the cause of those eternal truths, which, by their bright shining upon my soul, have set me free from all the terrors of superstition, from all fears for my future well-being, and almost steeled me against all sense of present calamity, causing me to feel my assurance of perfect and everlasting happiness in an endless life already commenced.'

"'You equivocate,' replied Annunciata, 'and refuse to answer the question I have put so often to you. Has or has not the reading of the Scripture been the means of changing your principles?'

"'If my principles are correct according to Scripture,' I answered, 'I am no heretic. If they are contrary to the words of truth, how could they have been produced by reading those words?'

"'Error may originate,' replied the sister, 'more readily from the misconstruction of Scripture than from the entire neglect of reading and hearing it explained; hence the rulers of the holy mother church deny it to the ignorant multitude, and do well in so doing. You hear it explained from the pulpit continually, Clarice; you learn portions of it in the catechism; you meditate on passages, given for that purpose by the superieure, every day,—what would you wish more? If you assert a privilege to judge and think for yourself, you deny the authority of the church, and are justly chargeable with heresy.'

"'What do you define the church to be, Annunciata?' I asked.

"'It is the assembly of all those who believe in Jesus Christ, and who acknowledge the sovereign Roman pontiff as his vicar.'

"'Who established this church?' I said.

"'Jesus Christ himself,' she replied. 'The invisible

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Chief of the mystic body of the church is Jesus Christ, and its visible chief is the pope, its members being all the faithful.'*

"'Permit me to ask,' I said, 'is it the visible or the invisible church of which you speak, Annunciata?'

"'What is the tendency of your question?' she asked. 'I speak of the holy apostolic Roman universal church.'

"'So much I comprehend,' I replied; 'but is this church, having a visible body, the visible or the invisible church?'

"She seemed to be a little confused at this question: but recovering herself in a moment, she answered, 'The church is a mystic body, and the soul which animates it is the Holy Spirit. It cannot therefore err, because it is animated and ruled by the Spirit of truth.'†

"'What am I to understand by the word mystic, Annunciata?' I asked.

"She shook her head at me, saying, 'Ah, Clarice, you are in the gall of bitterness—to what do all these questions tend?'

"'To truth, I trust,' was my reply. 'What do you mean by mystic?'

"'You take a position which does not appertain to you,' she answered. 'What belongs to you, as an impious heretic, but a seat in dust and ashes? And yet you presume to argue with me. Do you pretend to ask what mystic signifies? Know you not that a mystic body is one to which certain mysterious qualities appertain, which are beyond the comprehension of the natural understanding?'

"'This body, then,' I replied, 'which you call the church, is not a natural, but a mystic body; how then can it have a natural head (such as is the Roman pontiff), and yet retain its unity, for you will not dispute that the church is one?'

"'The true church,' she replied, 'is, in the first place, one, that is to say, it can have only one faith and one chief; in the second place, it is universal and perpetual; and, in the third place, it is holy.‡ Nor do I comprehend your argument, when you say that a mystic body cannot have a natural head, and yet retain its unity.'

* Catechisme Theologique des Jesuites. † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*

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"'Because,' I replied, 'new wine cannot be contained in old skins, nor can a new piece be sewed on an old garment; neither can the spiritual head belong to the corrupt natural body, nor the mystic body appertain to the natural head.'

"'The evil one,' returned Annunciata, with some violence, 'has helped you with these arguments, Clarice; and though I would by no means be forward to pronounce the anathema maranatha on your soul, yet I tell you that the notions which you hold tend to eternal damnation in the fires of hell. The holy Mother give me patience to hear you out! Do you deny the authority, the purity, and the universality of the church?'

"'No,' I replied; 'I deny none of these. I believe in the holy Catholic Church; I acknowledge its spiritual head, even the Lord the Saviour; I believe that its body is, as you say, a mystic one, composed of all whom the Father has given to the Son throughout all ages. I bow to its authority; I acknowledge its holiness and beauty as derived from the Saviour, but I deny that it has a seat on earth, or any authority over the kingdoms of this world; and having found my Father in heaven, I am resolved, henceforward, to call no one father on earth, for my inheritance is above; and where my treasure is, there I trust my heart will ever be.'

"'Am I to understand by all this,' said the sister, evidently putting strong force upon herself to restrain herself from any further violence of expression, 'that you are resolved to cherish your heretical opinions at all hazards?'

"'I have counted the cost,' I replied, 'and I trust that I shall be preserved even unto the end; for He that is with me is stronger than he that is against me.'

"'I came,' she answered in reply to this, 'to enforce a command sent from madame, through la Mère Ursule, which command was to this purpose, namely, that you should return to your duties; for it has never,' she added, 'entered into the mind of the superieure that you could possibly continue in a state of obstinacy after having endured so many penances. It must remain then with you to decide what message I must carry to madame;' and having spoken thus much, she stood in mute and solemn attention to my reply.

"'Tell the honoured lady,' I answered, 'that I consider myself bound to obey her commands in all things

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consistent with what I know to be my duty to a Higher Power.'

"'And this,' she asked, 'is what you desire me to say at all hazards?'

"'Yes,' I replied, 'at all hazards.'

"'Be it so,' she answered, and left the cell; shortly after which I was summoned into the presence of Father Joachim, whom I found in the superieure's parlour, that lady being also present. The father, I instantly saw, was in a fearful passion, for his face was perfectly livid, though it seems that some motive, which I did not then understand, rendered it necessary for him to restrain his emotions; and this necessity contended so violently with the vehemence of his zeal for the honour of his church, that every limb was in agitation; and while the conference lasted, he paced the room with rapid yet heavy steps, turning towards me, from time to time, with fiery eyes, trembling lips, and teeth which gnashed and foamed. His hints respecting what I might expect in case of continued obstinacy, however, were awful, though his arguments were few. And the superieure sat by, pale and still; and really, I think (to do her justice), actually terrified at the condition in which she saw me, prepared, as she thought, as a brand for everlasting burnings; for, as she herself has often said to me, my offences were far beyond the purifying fires of purgatory, even were those fires permitted to spend their utmost fury upon me for millions of ages.

"It would be tedious and unprofitable to repeat all that Father Joachim thought proper to say to me; but the conference ended in a manner which I did not expect. Instead of bringing my obedience to a test, as I had expected, by insisting on my joining in some idolatrous service, I was ordered to return to the mode of life which had been enjoined me for some weeks past, in which my sufferings were so far less than those which I yet anticipated, that I felt this decision to be entirely a reprieve.

"A diet of bread and water, and many hours of solitary meditation in the abbess's private chapel, both in the day and in the night, during which I was admonished to repeat so many hundreds, nay thousands, of ave marias, kneeling always upon my knees, were nothing when compared with the horrors with which I had been threatened; and therefore when I was told to withdraw

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to my solitude, it was difficult for me to conceal the satisfaction with which I hastened to obey, for I had found pleasures in this retirement, or rather pleasures had been found for me, which I can hardly describe. How truly doth the Scripture say, 'He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.' I had learned many Scriptures by heart, and these were brought to my remembrance most wonderfully in these solitary hours. Even passages which I had acquired in my nursery, and in the English language, came back to my mind at those times, with small portions of hymns, replete with gospel truth; and such sweet recollections of my father, my brother, my pious nurse, and the green and fragrant fields, and violet banks, and hedge-rows of my native land, all spread beneath a summer sky, presented themselves at those times to my fancy, that I would even weep with joy to think that these were but the earnests of my heavenly Father's love, and but faint and indistinct images of those delights which are prepared for such as have been brought to love the Father as seen through the Son, and as brought near and made known by the Holy Spirit. And at these times it was unfolded to me, that the whole course of time might be divided into three dispensations:—the first, in which the human race, being in its infancy, was taught by palpable figures, this dispensation terminating soon after the manifestation of the Holy Ghost: the second, being that which is entirely spiritual, and hence not to be apprehended by the natural faculties, during which period the divine work is carried on by the Lord the Spirit in the heart of the individual, and multitudes, past count, are brought in again into that union with God which is eternal life; this mighty work being effected by the secret inflowings of the Divine Spirit, by which the body, which was in a state of death according to nature, becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost: and the third and last, which partakes of, or rather verifies in perfection, the imperfect glories which have gone before under the two former dispensations; being that portion of time when the redemption of the body of the believer being complete, the soul and the body shall rejoice together with the incarnate Redeemer. Then came verses like these to my mind:—'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the

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dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.' Isaiah xxvi. 16. 'Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' John xi. 25, 26. And from time to time I stole my little Bible from its hiding-place, and drew fresh draughts from the fountain of truth: truly I had many sweet and refreshing moments during that season, and I have often considered that these refreshments were vouchsafed to me in order that I should be strengthened and invigorated for that which was to follow.

"I have calculated that these conversations with la Mère Ursule Annunciata, and Father Joachim took place on the very day that Sister Angelique entered the house as pensionnaire; and that the motive which held back the heads of the establishment from more violent measures with me was the very precarious state of the times, better known to Father Joachim than to us within the house.

"The monastic establishments had already been destroyed in France, and there was a great cry raised against the rulers of the church in other countries. It was, therefore, desirable that I should be brought to obedience, if possible, without exasperating any of the younger members of the family, who are always jealous of any stretch of authority, or any semblance of severity; and, accordingly, having been kept 'in penitence' until the day of the profession of Sister Angelique, the superieure then called me into her presence, and having stated to me, on the one hand, what the consequences would be if I continued in disobedience (and very terrible indeed did she make these appear), and on the other, the immediate relief which I should experience in case of my submission, she proceeded, without permitting me to reply, to lay her commands upon me, that I should join the rest of the family at the goûté. My dear sister Pauline witnessed the effect of my appearance there; and as I could not be prevailed upon to say that I would renounce my heresies, or even attempt to disguise them, as the superieure, in the true spirit of the apostate church, would have persuaded me that I might do with safety to my conscience under the plea of necessity, other measures were soon after had recourse to. I was stigmatized as being under the influ-

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ence of evil spirits; and although permitted to go at large in the house, and commanded to attend the services, yet I was not permitted to hold any converse with my sisters. It was then that I began to feel the furious and unrelenting nature of popish bigotry; and poor Annunciata, thinking, perhaps, that she did God service, was not unseldom the instrument of their severity.

"I have used a hard word, God forgive me, but my trials were dreadful; yet, how far short did they fall of those which have been endured by many of the excellent of the earth; by many of those 'who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong.' It was between the period in which I was first denounced as a demoniac and that in which I was publicly anathematized by Father Joachim, that I was made to attend all the services at the door of the chœur; in comparison with which, the solitude which I had enjoyed in the superieure's chapel was ease to me, for I was obliged to retain always the same posture, holding the heavy unlighted taper. I was at large, indeed, in the house, and this was only a sort of refinement of punishment, because I was thereby only the more exposed to universal scorn; for there were few whose eyes could penetrate the cloud in which I was involved,—few, very few; only, indeed, the kind Mère Genefride, who often gave me a look of pity, which descended as a ray of light on a darkened landscape; and my own sweet sisters Pauline and Angelique, to whom I owed that communication from my beloved brother which, although I understood it not so at that time, was the forerunner of my great and wonderful deliverance. But on this topic I will not expatiate, lest I should lose the thread of that narrative of which the clew is already too much broken. My strength, as you well know, my sisters, at length sunk under these continual fatigues of standing during all the services; and the interest of some of the sisters, it seems, having been excited in my favour, it was thought expedient to turn the course of these feelings by that test to which all the family was witness; and the cross having fallen at my feet, I was banished for ever from the society as one rejected by the church, and devoted to eternal destruction. And then, my friends, then it was that I was

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made to drink deep, deep indeed, of the cup of fury, mixed up and poured out by the idolatrous church, even her on whose forehead it is written, *Mystery, Babylon, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.*

"I was seen no more in the family, as you well remember, subsequent to that evening, but was sent back, after the mockery of the fall of the cross, to my own cell, in a private part of the house, where, for several days, I know not how many, I was left alone, without seeing a living creature, my food being given me through a tour, and my door being opened to me every night by la Mère Ursule, in order that I might go down to pray and meditate in the cimetière, under the white marble cross; and in order that my figure should not be discerned by the sisters descending to and ascending from the officium nocturnum, I was admonished to wrap myself in a white sheet, and to kneel on the eastern side of the cross. During these cold vigils, and in that gloomy place, amid the mouldering bones of hundreds who had, through ages past, lived and died within those ancient seats of superstition, my meditations often took so sad a form that I used to weep continually, sitting on the marble slab at the foot of the cross, with my head resting on my knees, till, in that attitude, sleep would sometimes surprise me; and it was on one of these occasions that a sudden gust of wind, lifting the drapery which I had drawn over my head, occasioned the alarm which was given by Sister Clotilde, with which I was immediately reproached on my return to my cell by la Mère Ursule; and as I still refused to yield any of my opinions, it was at last decided that I should be removed from the place which I had hitherto occupied, to that which was said to be more fit for one so lost to all sense of right as I was then supposed to be.

"I could not, at that time, account for this rather sudden change of measures, but I comprehended it afterward. It seems that the father Joachim had a particular friend, a Jesuit, with whom he had associated in the Jesuits' College at Nice, where he had been educated. This man, namely, the father Juliano, had gone to Rome at the time his friend had come to St. Siffren, and had there become the favourite of a certain cardinal, who had pushed his fortune, giving him an important place in the Inquisition, besides other benefices and

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nominal cures, one of which was under our own bishop. In this last character he had come to St. Siffren to prepare things for the reception of his superior, who was shortly expected; and it seems that Father Joachim had mentioned my case to him, and been severely reproved for the lenity which had been shown to me. How truly does the Scripture say, 'The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.' Certainly the treatment I had received up to that time had been severe enough to subdue any spirit supported by no strength but that which is natural. But as this treatment was decided to be too mild, and as it was said that when the bishop came he would think it had been so,—my sin being that of heresy after having known the truth, and hence being the greatest which can be conceived,—other measures were advised, and Father Juliano had entreated that they should be acted upon that very night: and although madame kindly wished to have a private conversation with me in the morning, before I had, as it were, sealed my condemnation, yet the alarm which I speak of, which was attributed to some carelessness on my part, hastened their purposes, and accordingly la Mère Ursule came to me as soon as I had returned to my cell, and bidding me to follow her, she led me through certain private passages into the apartment of the superieure.

"There she sat, leaning her head upon her hand, her arm resting upon a marble slab, on which was a crucifix, with a light burning before it. She seemed much agitated. Annunciata stood behind her chair, in an attitude usual with her, namely, having her arms folded within her wide sleeves, and her eyes fixed on the ground. Then and there the superieure first solemnly stated the awful alternative which was before me,—either on the one hand a decided recantation of my errors, which I was to evince at that present time, by kneeling down and adoring the visible cross; or, on the other, perpetual confinement in a dungeon beneath the house, in eternal seclusion from the light of day.

"'Not eternal, madame,' was the answer which I made; 'my seclusion from the light of day will not be eternal. I know in whom I have trusted, and I shall not be confounded.'

"Annunciata changed her posture as I uttered these words, but spoke not; and the abbess again addressed

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me—'Do you understand, Clarice,' she asked, 'what the church asserts respecting heretics?' I made no reply, and she thus proceeded: 'It is certain that there are many heretics who know not their error; but there are very few who have not great cause to apprehend that they are in error. And even should they have no doubt, and should they believe themselves to be in the true church, it is, however, almost impossible that they should save themselves, because it is almost impossible, in the liberty in which they live, not to fall into an infinity of disorders and great sins, from which they cannot recover themselves by the sacrament of penitence, which they have not, but only by a pure love of God, of which it is very difficult to form an act, such as is requisite in order to be saved.'*

"I had learned all this exordium by heart, and knew whence it came, but I do not remember my reply. The conference was long, and the superieure seemed to me to be truly earnest in her endeavours to persuade me to recant; but through the Divine grace, which was made sufficient for me, I was enabled to persevere. Indeed my mind was strangely, as it were, diverted from some of the most frightful circumstances of my situation, by the dread lest an examination of my person, or a change of dress, should be proposed; in which case my precious little Bible would have been found, for I had been divinely led, I believe, a few nights before, to take it from its hiding-place, and conceal it about my person, in the same manner in which it was found when I arrived in this happy resting-place. However, no personal examination of me was proposed; and when all hope of my submission had been given up by the superieure, who certainly showed more feeling during this scene than either of the other persons present, I was admonished that my fate was sealed, and that I must submit to it with what heart I could. And immediately, at the signal of the abbess, Annunciata and la Mère Ursule came forward, and each taking hold of an arm, they drew me out of the chamber; this force being necessary, as I was endeavouring to throw myself at the feet of the superieure to implore her mercy, as a last resource.

"'Kneel not to me, miserable apostate, kneel not to me. Bend not before me those stubborn knees, which despise the symbol of the dying Jesus!' she exclaimed;

* Catechisme des Jesuites.

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and rising, with a sort of hysterical shriek, she added, 'O Clarice! unhappy Clarice! would I had died before I had seen this day!'

"'Mother! dear, dear mother!' I replied, 'believe me, believe your unhappy child! I do not despise the cross of Christ—nay, I glory in it—I live by it—it is all in all to me; but the visible and palpable symbol I cannot worship.' I was proceeding, when la Mère Ursule struck me on the mouth, saying, 'Speak not your blasphemies in this sacred chamber;' and then placing her strong arm round my waist, she dragged me out of the superieure's apartment, and through her private chapel, into an ante-room, which led to a cell over the porch which looks upon the cimetière.

"In this cell were two tapers burning, upon a marble slab, one of which was instantly taken up by Annunciata, and the other by la Mère Ursule, both of them having loosed their hold of me at the same moment. This cell, as you may remember, sisters, is wainscoted with black larch-wood in panels. The window is small, and doubly grated, commanding the cimetière and the whole of the surrounding buildings.

"Being at liberty for a moment, I fell down upon my knees, not to ask pity from those who knew no such feeling, but to implore that support from God which is never withheld in the time of need. But I was rudely lifted from this posture by the mother, while the sister, moving a secret spring in the wainscot, caused a panel to open, by which a flight of narrow winding stairs revealed itself to our view. A damp cold air at the same time rushed into the chamber, causing the flames of the tapers to flare in the faces of those who held them.

"The sight of these stairs was so terrible to me, that I sprang back to the extent of the chamber, and struggled with my companions when they would have seize my arms again. I know not what I said to them—I was in a phrensy, and shrieked wildly, reproaching Annunciata in a way which I have since reflected upon with much sorrow, ever recollecting with pain one expression which I used, namely, 'You will one day remember this with anguish and sorrow of heart, and that day may arrive sooner than you think.' God forgive me this expression! There was a spirit of vengeance in it; and such breakings forth of natural corruption ought to admonish us that our strength is in the Lord,

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and in him only, and that the moment we are left to ourselves, we make it appear that we are as utterly vile, as far as self is concerned, even after having been made to receive the truth and feel its power, as we were when in total ignorance of its saving influences. But I do not remember this scene accurately—it seems like a terrible dream, in which every image of horror was collected by the infernal powers; not to subdue me—for it was impossible to tear me from the arms of omnipotent grace which surrounded me—but to exhibit the malice of the evil one.

"My struggles were, however, vain; I was dragged down those winding stairs, and through long vaulted passages and gloomy chambers, where the long-pent-up vapours caused the chest to contract, as under some terrible load. At length we arrived at the end of a long passage, at an iron-bound massive door, filling a narrow pointed portal. What my thoughts were, when I saw this last earnest of all I most feared on earth, viz. perpetual solitary confinement, I cannot say; for I was stupified—I was like one in a terrible dream—I did not attempt to speak. Yet my state was not that of despair, though I am unable to describe it; of this, however, I am assured, that God can give a peace of mind which is entirely independent of outward circumstances. Nor does it proceed from any thing like self-esteem, as philosophy vainly boasts, in some such oft-repeated sentence as the following, namely, 'that virtue is its own reward,' and 'a sense of rectitude will carry a man triumphantly through every adverse turn of fortune;' for at that crisis of severe trial I was by no means pleased with myself. I had broken out, but a few minutes before, in expressions unworthy of my Christian calling; and this offence had, through the divine grace, been made to divest me of that proud feeling of martyrdom (if I may use the term) which was creeping upon me, when la Mère Ursule had so far lowered herself as to strike me on the mouth.

"A key was produced without delay for opening the lock, and the door the next moment swung on its hinges; but before my eye could penetrate the obscurity which was within, my companions pushed me forward through the portal, closing the door after me with a jarring noise, the reverberation of which must almost have reached to the chambers above; and all this was effected with such haste, that, ere I could recollect my-

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self, I heard the departing steps of my persecutors dying away along the passage. But I was not left in darkness, as I had anticipated. I was in a wide chamber of unhewn stone, or probably partly cut out from the rock on which the house was founded. From the arched ceiling hung an iron lamp, which gave a faint and glimmering light, though one which I afterward found quite sufficient for every desirable purpose. I observed that there were several pieces of furniture in this gloomy apartment. I saw a pallet bed near to the door, and another at the farther end of the room, with a table and a stool. But while I wandered, and asked myself, Have all these preparations been made for me?—a figure rose from the farthest of the two pallets I have mentioned, and stepping on the side of the bed, exhibited the dim outline of a human form.

"I was taken by surprise; I had no idea that I should find a companion in this place, and I could think of nothing earthly. All the terrors of superstition were let loose upon me at once; I shrieked wildly, and fell on the cold pavement in a deadly swoon. Thus, as I have often since considered, do we meet those blessings which approach in dubious form, being incapable of appreciating the many mercies which are in the first instance not inviting to flesh and blood. You look at me, my friends—you seem amazed, and well you may be; but you have heard of Agnace—her history shall be explained in its place.

"Had I been apprized that I was to have a companion in my solitude, I should have rejoiced in the anticipation. As it was, as I before stated, the sudden appearance of this poor emaciated creature terrified me beyond expression; for, as it may be well believed, she looked more like one falling into the grave, or rising from it, than any thing else I can conceive. Dear Agnace! Oh, how did I love that poor solitary one. The few short weeks we spent together did more to unite our hearts than years of kindly intercourse could have done in ordinary circumstances. It was a blessed arrangement of Divine Providence which brought me into the society of that poor Agnace.

"It was long before I awoke from my swoon, and when I did revive I found the poor nun busy about me, bathing my temples with water: she had nothing else wherewith to help me; and when I opened my eyes and

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saw her again, I should assuredly have relapsed into fainting from very terror, had she not spoken, bidding me not fear; calling me poor young creature, and weeping for my sufferings.

"On my eagerly asking her who and what she was, she told me her history in a few words: a history which filled me with amazement; for although I had heard that such a person had been, yet I had never entertained the slightest idea that she still was.

"She was a little woman, but had the appearance of extreme old age. Her face was long; her features set and rigid, and she was bent nearly double, as if from age, though she had not attained her fiftieth year. She had endeavoured, I found, to raise me when I lay insensible, but had not strength; and when I was sufficiently recovered, she guided me to a pallet, which had been set for me in a corner of the wide chamber, and there laying me, she drew the thin covering over me and sat down at my feet.

"'Speak to me, speak to me,' I said; 'let me hear the human voice—that voice divine: tell me, why are you here? how long have you been confined in this place? why have I been placed with you, and not alone? Why have they showed me so much mercy, as to give me a companion in my captivity? There is kindness in this.'

"'They have brought you here, poor child,' she answered, 'that I may tell you how I fell into deadly heresy, and how I have been restored to the bosom of the church by a severity which will appear to be kindness in that day when I shall find myself for ever free from these poor rags of mortality.'

"'Have you then recanted?' I asked.

"'I have seen my error,' she replied.

"I sighed deeply, and even wept; and these tears seemed to relieve me.

"'They have brought you here,' she said, 'that I may talk with you, dear child; God help you, and God help me. May our acquaintance with each other in this dungeon be the means of our reunion in glory. Therefore I pray that I may be assisted in the task set before me. Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina, ave Maria gratia plena;' and she crossed herself several times.

"To all this I made no reply: 'It will be a precious

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and blessed work,' she continued, 'to set in the balance against my many sins, if I should be the means of leading you, my child, from the way of error.'

"'Are you quite sure,' I asked, 'that you are now nearer the truth than when you first entered this dungeon? Dear mother, time must now be short with you, and you have had few means of instruction. As we have thus met, let us together examine the truth. Do you know the holy Scriptures?'

"'How should I, my child?' she replied; 'I never saw them.'

"'Then by what means did you acquire those principles by which you incurred the displeasure of the church?'

"'I derived them,' she answered, 'from a young lady to whom I was employed to teach Italian; and she instructed me from certain books, the tendency of which was to overthrow all religion. I was a spirited and proud girl, and I spoke contemptuously of the mother of God. Misere me, domina! I was obstinate, too, and I refused submission to the commands of the church: they dealt harshly with me, and my reason gave way. I became a maniac, or rather I was delivered over to Satan to work his will with me: but they made me see my error. Yet it was not till the very memory of my name had passed away from all in the house. They will not tell me how many years have gone over my head since I was here. I have nothing whereby to count the progress of days: but I have enjoyed many comforts, daughter, since I have been readmitted into the bosom of the church.'

"'And was it to obtain these comforts, mother,' I asked, 'that you were induced to recant?'

"'No,' she replied; 'I trust that I have not committed that sin; inasmuch as I had recanted some time before light, and warm clothing, and better food were granted me.'

"'I thank God that you can say this,' I answered; 'but, dear mother, let us consult and pray together. Let us, with the Divine help, examine the truth, and having no other hope, let us take fast hold, the Almighty helping us, of that which we may be led to see as truth. For if these our spiritual rulers are right, I do not hesitate to say, the Scriptures are false; and if the Scriptures are right, the Roman Catholic Church is

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idolatrous, corrupt, deceitful, and altogether abominable.'

"'Nay, daughter,' replied the old religieuse, clasping her attenuated hands, 'nay, do not speak so,'—and she looked round the dungeon as if in terror, crossing herself repeatedly, and invocating various saints, and entreating their prayers, as in the Kyrie Eleison.

"But as my present history must necessarily run to a great length, I will take some future occasion to describe at large all the passages of my intercourse with this poor Agnace. I shall merely say, that within a short time of my becoming her companion in that drear abode, which, from all the computation I have been able to make, she had occupied alone for thirty years, I was taken very ill, and remained for many hours quite helpless and unable to assist myself; and that during that time no mother could have been kinder and more tender than dear Agnace was to me. I could weep now only to think of the various ways in which she tried to ease and comfort me, and it was wonderful, and surely divinely ordered, how her natural affections, which for years had entirely wanted an object, were, as it were, kindled by me into a flame, which burnt high and bright, and terminated only with her existence.

"I have since been led to see, also, what I did not understand at that time, that it was expedient that this affection for me should be kindled in her breast, to prepare her for receiving that instruction which I was afterward enabled to give her, through the guidance, I trust, of the Lord the Spirit. This, I say, I did not understand at the time, though I have seen it since: but I should despair of describing all the little kindnesses of this poor deserted creature. With us it was indeed one long night, the progress of time being only marked by the visits of la Mère Ursule, to bring us our food, and such small matters as were deemed sufficient for us, which she constantly passed to us by means of a tour: but though I could not distinguish day from night, I could not be deceived in this fact, that there were few hours in the twenty-four in which Agnace was not by me, serving me with her trembling hands, or endeavouring to sooth and comfort me by using arguments for that purpose which were far from being suited to the state of my mind, though they might have been so to hers. Poor old lady! I think I see her meager figure

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now, her pale face attenuated by suffering, and her gentle eye, which was never again to see the light of day; and behold her hovering about my pallet, and trying to render that easy which had never been intended to be so. Ah! poor sufferer; how I found my heart drawn towards her. I gave her all my confidence, even to the extent of confessing that I possessed a Bible; and when I was sufficiently recovered I was induced, without loss of time, to lead her to the study of the truths therein contained. I read to her for hours; not only for her but my own instruction. Oh! with what eager joy did we imbibe the water of life, flowing from the holy Word. I knew not then how short the time of the poor sufferer was, but I felt myself impelled to say all that was in my mind, and I thank God that my humble endeavours were speedily blessed, through the Divine grace, and according to the Scripture, which saith, 'He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness.' Rom. ix. 28. Hitherto that poor Agnace had never seen a Bible; not one single drop of the fountain of truth had ever reached her lips in an uncorrupted state—not one draught had passed her lips which had not been fouled by the feet (Ezek. xxiv. 18), and yet, ignorant as she was, deplorably and wretchedly ignorant as to aught which man could teach, her soul was as a watered garden, prepared for the seed, which was shed thereon through the ministry of the Word, and which forthwith sprang up and brought forth a hundred fold. It is true, that through the force of terror she had, within a few years past, entirely conformed to all that was required of her by her spiritual tyrants: yet, making all allowances for her weakness of body, her ignorance of the divine letter, and her timidity of mind, this poor creature—and that before I became her companion—was a most eminent example of regenerating and sanctifying grace, and even of illumination, so far as it regarded the preparation of the heart, and the readiness to receive the truth in all humility and self-abasement; and all this mighty change had been wrought in her soul in entire independence of human means.

"It would be a curious inquiry, how far instances of this kind are common; an inquiry which can only be answered from Scripture, and which will in its establishment meet with much opposition, inasmuch as it tends to the lowering of the importance of the ministry

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of man, who proudly applies to himself those words of Holy Writ, namely, 'How shall they hear without a preacher?' None considering that he by whom the mouth of man is opened is able to speak without the assistance of the creature whom he has made; none saying, 'Where is God our Maker, who giveth songs in the night, who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?' Job xxxv. 10, 11. 'For God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not: in a dream; in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.' Job xxxiii. 14–16.

"How full of deep interest are these reflections! how they tend to lower the pretensions of man, and to fill the heart with hope for multitudes of those poor creatures which are beyond the influence of any human ministry! It is true that the ministry of man is necessary for the admission of an individual into the visible church; and multitudes of those who minister therein have, no doubt, been employed to point out the way of life to those who were wandering in the paths of darkness. Yet that the ministry of man is necessary to God's purposes is still a question with me; or that he does not carry on his divine purposes in man's regeneration, in many instances in total independence of all human means, I dare not say: but these are mysteries which are not given to us to understand. What mind by searching can find out God?

"Suffice it to say, that I found poor Agnace fully and divinely prepared to receive the instruction which I was enabled to give her by the ministry of the Word; that in a few weeks she was enabled to reject all those fallacious views with which Father Joachim had endeavoured to fill her poor mind, and to fix her entire dependence on Christ her Saviour; to see also that her redemption was assured; that the divine life was already imparted; and that the powers of hell could never prevail against her. And having, through the mercy of God, received the truth in all its fulness, she gave evidence, in the midst of much bodily suffering and many severe privations, that she had already entered into his rest. 'For we which have believed do enter into rest,' and cease from our own dead works: and such a peace, such an assurance of hope, such a sense of divine love

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spread themselves over her existence, from that time she was ready continually to break forth in singing, and the burden of her song was, 'Glory to God on high; peace and good-will towards man.'

"But it was remarkable, that in proportion as spiritual peace was imparted to her, her poor body began sensibly and rapidly to decay: insomuch, that after a while she was obliged entirely to take to her miserable pallet. Yet why should I call it miserable? for I do not hesitate to say, that her bodily sufferings were actually as nothing, when placed in contrast with the exquisite peace which she enjoyed without interruption. Poor old lady; I have sat by her for hours, I know not whether by night or day, sometimes reading by the feeble light of the lamp, sometimes conversing, sometimes in silent meditation. I saw that death was approaching by slow and measured steps, stealing kindly and tenderly upon her, being disarmed of all his terrors, and having this commission only, to open the cage and let the dove go free. For the soul of this meek and holy woman might, through the sovereign grace of the blessed Lord, be addressed in these words, 'Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' Psalm lxviii. 13. And thus all was bright and full of joy, as it regarded Agnace; and I thank my God that it was so ordained that my sufferings, though I blush to call my light afflictions which endured but for a moment by such a term, should have redounded so abundantly to the consolation of this gentle and patient creature. Yet my unbelieving heart was not able to cast off all its selfish fear. It was an awful prospect to me to think that I must, alone, and in such a scene, witness the mortal agony of this poor creature, and be shut up with her cold remains, perhaps for hours. Oh! I was unbelieving: but I am forgiven; I have not a master who cannot be touched with the feeling of my infirmities. I thank God, however, that I never betrayed these selfish apprehensions to Agnace, but tried to act by her as a daughter to a tender mother; and, oh! how was her poor heart drawn out in love to me, and in gratitude to God for giving her such a friend in the hour of need!

"Thus we went on, for I hardly know how many days, without experiencing any interruptions but from occasional visits from la Mère Ursule. Our cell was

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considerably removed from the subterranean chapel; yet we heard the service which took place in the presence of the bishop. Agnace was awakened from sleep by the sweet notes of the chanting; and, starting up in her bed, 'Clarice!' she said, 'are we already received into glory? Do I not hear the voices of angels? Is the bitterness of death already past?'

"I wept when she put the question; and putting my arms round her I soothed her, to rest again. Oh! how did I love that poor deserted one: but I was called away to the interview with the bishop; and the worst I then dreaded was, that I should not be taken back to Agnace. Truly I should then have grieved, if it had been decided that I should immediately be restored to the light of day; and therefore, when the bishop commanded me back to my dungeon, it was with difficulty that I dissembled the thankfulness of joy which I experienced. It seems that my judges had been at a loss what to decide respecting me; and thus I was again left with dear Agnace for many days; at the end of which time I was brought up several times into the chamber above the porch, and there permitted to be seen by several of the sisters, though never allowed to speak to any one. There I had several fruitless conferences with Father Joachim and the inquisitor. It has since appeared to me quite evident, why there appeared to be so much irresolution in their treatment of me; the state of the times was such that they did not dare to do by me as they had done by Agnace (and probably many others in time past), that is, without accounting to any one respecting my fate, to cause me to disappear from my place, never more to return to it, and to exercise their will upon me in their secret councils in whatever way might suit them best. But this, at that time, was not thought to be expedient. Hence, when their fiery zeal would have urged them to finish the contest by some deadly decision, worldly prudence held them back; and yet, as the inquisitor stated to them in my presence, it was totally impossible for them to set me at liberty, after having made me acquainted with the existence of Agnace; a measure which had been suggested by this Jesuit himself, in order, as has appeared to me upon reflection, that the superieure, and perhaps the bishop, might thus be compelled to more severe measures with me than the former had been in-

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clined to adopt; and the superieure had fallen into this snare, from the persuasion that the sight of the sufferer, and perhaps her arguments, might tend to bring me round, it not having occurred to her, in the agitation of the moment, that when I had once been made acquainted with the frightful secrets of the house, it would become necessary to exclude me for ever from all intercourse with the family. And yet, at the same time, it was not easy to suggest any means by which to account for my total disappearance, without exciting suspicions which might eventually prove highly detrimental to the safety of the establishment.

"My recantation could not then have served their purpose, as it might have done at first. This also was evident to them all; and I can hardly conceive to what measures they would have had recourse, if various circumstances had not occurred together, which would have effectually brought them through their difficulties, had it not been for the critical state of public affairs, and the strong excitement of popular opinion against monastic houses; which excitement awaited only a mere conjectural whisper that some one of the sisters was suffering persecution within the walls, to rise into a flame. But these various circumstances, apparently so fortunate for the promotion of their views, were, first, the pestilence; secondly, the terror which all the sisters felt in approaching an individual supposed to be dying, or to have died from the disease; and, thirdly, the actual death of poor Agnace in the very midst of the ravages of this pestilence.

"It would have been strange if minds such as some of our rulers possessed could not work out from all these favourable circumstances such a conclusion as was most to be desired by them. For three days or more, it was evident that Agnace was approaching to extremities. She might have lingered longer, but her parting-breath was exhausted by the vehemence with which she refused the last sacraments, tendered to her by Father Joachim; and the earnestness with which she renounced all hopes or expectations of salvation from any quarter but from that of the merits of Christ, as revealed to her by the Father, through the influences of the Holy Spirit. Thus she was upheld unto the end. Neither was she moved by the anathema maranathas of the priest, who, as he left the cell, shook the dust from his feet.

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"Well do I remember that solemn moment in which all departed, namely, the priest, the abbess, la Mère Ursule, and Annunciata, and closed the door on me and the dying saint. I was stupid with grief. I sat by her pillow—I raised her in my arms—my tears fell upon her pale cold face. She was sensible of all I did for her. I heard her say, in a low and inward voice, 'Blessed, happy, precious child! fear not, my own beloved Clarice! Yet a little while, my sweet one, and all will be well. I thank my God for thee, my Clarice.' She slept, I think, a little, while I thus held her; but insensibly her head sank heavier on my breast, I listened, and thought that she had ceased to breathe, and I thought that her soul had passed. That it was not so made no difference to my feelings at that time: I was alone as to all human comfort. And then from that time the remembrance of events became confused; neither can I distinguish that which really happened from dreams and unrealities. I cannot say whether they spent their rage upon me by spectral similitudes, introduced into my cell, or whether these things were the effect of an unsettled brain; I cannot but believe that I was, from that period until I had been in this blessed place of rest for several days, in a sort of delirium. Perhaps I was actually under the influence of fever, or the blood driven from the heart had rushed to the head.

"I know not at what hour they removed poor Agnace; but they took her up, supposing her to be dead, into the cell over the porch. Whether it was the removal to a better air, or whatever other cause, I know not, but certain it is that she revived on being brought up, and that the superieure again entreated her to receive the sacraments appointed by the church; but these she resisted, and, as I was afterward told, died as she had lived, to the unfeigned horror of the superieure. Nevertheless, it was thought prudent to bury her with all their idolatrous ceremonies.

"They brought me up to see the funeral. I saw it through the grated window. It was torch-light; and they told me that I was buried in that grave, and that I existed no longer as to this world; that Pauline and Angelique would believe me dead, and have no motive to engage Madame Verani any more in my cause: for it had not escaped their notice that these two beloved sisters had found some means of conveying intelligence

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respecting me to Madame Verani. And they told me that my friends would suppose me dead—my mother and my brother, my beautiful brother, as I used to call him, and as I have since found him—my own sweet brother! And I grew wild and desperate, and was dragged down to my cell. Nor can I tell you how the time went, till the hour of my deliverance; I knew not one hour from another—I was left in darkness—I took no note of time. I slept and dreamed, and when pressed with hunger and thirst, ate my bread and drank my water, and stretched myself again on my pallet.

"And strange wild visions floated over my mind, my thoughts not being in the smallest degree under my own control; neither can I describe their nature. God be praised, who had not forgotten me in this my hour of utmost need, that they were not wicked or blasphemous. No! I was preserved from those horrors. But they were more like the thoughts of a little child—visions of my father's house and father's park, and distant hills, and running waters, and sunny landscapes, sometimes clear and again confused—sometimes sweet, and then changing into all that is horrible. And I fancied that it was one long night since Agnace had died, and that the morning, though still far off, would yet come and dispel the gloom. And I confounded the sweet image of my father with that which I had conceived of my blessed Saviour; and that of Agnace with my aged grandmother, whom I hardly remember. And this was my condition when the day of my wonderful deliverance arrived.

"It was as it were after a long dream, a sort of visionary mode of existence which I cannot describe, that a sudden jarring sound caused me to start. I arose on my feet: the door of my prison was thrown open, a flood of dazzling and confounding light burst upon my eyes, and two men appeared. I could not distinguish them by sight, for I was blinded by what was to me an excess of light: but I knew their voices; they were those of Father Joachim and the Jesuit. The father seized me round the waist, called me an accursed one, dragged or rather carried me, I know not which, along what passages, or through what doors, I cannot say, though I am aware that several doors were fastened and barred behind us. I knew not what these men said to me as we proceeded; a few horrible words stood out

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as it were in high relief above all the other parts of their speech; these were, the Inquisition, the auto-da-fé, the question.

"At length we arrived at a winding stair, which ascended, as I supposed, to the level of the earth. There I struggled from the father's grasp, and fell at his feet, imploring mercy where mercy never was,—even from an offended and jealous member of the great papal anti-christian church. He first spurned me from him as I seized the skirt of his robe, and then seizing me and dragging me up, he ascended the stairs, followed by the Jesuit, bearing a torch. And here," said Clarice, "have I brought my wonderful history to that point in which the kind, the ineffably kind and marvellous providences of my Almighty Father begin to unfold themselves; shining with a heavenly and unextinguishable light through the clouds which for a while had wholly darkened my unbelieving mind. 'Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful mercy to the children of men.'"

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

Such was the account which our sweet Clarice (to whom I shall now give her baptismal name of Emily) gave of herself. I will not pay so poor a compliment to my reader as to suppose that it will be needful to make many comments on this extraordinary history. Suffice it to say that we all heard it with intense interest; and that from the moment it was concluded, Pauline and I resolved to renounce that form of worship which had for ages maintained its influence over the earth by deeds of horror such as she described and such as we had seen.

But inasmuch as when I commenced my history I expected to finish it in a few sheets, I am now much disconcerted to find that it has run to a thick volume, and therefore am desirous of bringing it to a conclusion as speedily as possible; although I cannot but feel that the

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reader who has followed me so far will not be without anxiety to know what more I have to relate respecting the persons who have acted, in several instances, such parts in my narrative as must have rendered them objects of some interest.

My reader may calculate the years which have passed since the boiling populace of France poured over the boundaries of their kingdom into that of Sardinia. During the course of those years we, who were then young, have been descending into the vale of life, and many have been the changes which we have experienced since the period of which I am now speaking; namely, our residence with the worthy family in Switzerland.

Having concluded the wonderful history of dear Emily, I must inform my reader how Mr. Beaumont became acquainted with d'Ivannois. It was at Geneva, to which place he had come on his way to St. Siffren, to inquire after his sister. William at that time undertook to accompany him to St. Siffren, and there, finding that Madame Verani had a relation who had just entered the convent, the three parties were drawn together by the same tie, namely, that of a dear friend of each having taken the fatal vows under the same roof.

Edward and William, it seems, had at first no other expectation in coming to St. Siffren than to see those whom they loved, if it were only through the grating in the church; but other hopes were afterward awakened by the destruction of many religious houses in different parts of the King of Sardinia's dominions. Hence arose the project so successfully executed, for the deliverance of their friends.

After Emily had relieved her mind by making us acquainted with her whole story, and when Pauline and I had entirely decided upon leaving the apostate church, the spirits of the whole party became calm. Sweet Emily recovered her health and bloom, and all that cheerfulness of manner which accompanies bright views of religion.

The winter had set in severely, and Madame d'Ivannois would not hear of our moving till the spring. In truth, I had no home to which to fly. Monsieur Verani had transmitted my property (though in a much diminished state) to a banker in Geneva, from whom, by Mr. Beaumont's advice, it was sent to England, as safer at

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that time than any place on the Continent. I had therefore a small independence; but I had no home, excepting, as I thought, in the heart of my Pauline; for poor Madame Verani was then as much a wanderer as myself. Yet I was not anxious; Madame d'Ivannois would not part with us, and accordingly we spent the whole winter there, in that sweet solitude, often entirely shut up by snow. Monsieur and Madame Verani had come to see us just before one of the heaviest falls: hence we were a very large party and we had the Bible open to us, and we were continually studying that holy book, finding new beauties and enjoying new privileges as believers every day; the pastor of the village, a holy, pious, and enlightened old man, often joining our party.

I could, did it suit me, enter into a long description of the various means used by William and his parents to induce Pauline so entirely to cast off the weight of the vow which she had taken, as to accept her cousin for a companion for life. It would be too much to repeat all the arguments which they used,—but that which chiefly prevailed upon her was this; that as her vows had been taken without the sanction of the written Word, and merely according to the pleasure of man, they were no longer binding when they were seen to be contrary to the will of God. For Christ our Lord has never required of his creatures that they should, on his account, reject that decree by which man is commanded to leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife; "forbidding to marry" being a mark of a church given to will-worship rather than of one holding a pure faith, as may be proved from many passages of Scripture. Accordingly, soon after Christmas-day, my own beloved Pauline became the wife of William, and the happy daughter of Monsieur and Madame d'Ivannois. We were a large party at the wedding, for I verily believe there were not ten persons in the valley who were not present, nor one individual who did not partake of the good cheer.

Were I to live to the end of time, I think that I should not forget that day. It was the last day of the year, and the whole valley was covered with snow, not to speak of the amazing heights by which we were encompassed, which were one vast mass of snow, except in those parts where the steepness of the rocks

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rendered it impossible for it to lay; and these parts being almost black formed a very curious contrast with the dazzling whiteness of the snow around them. The window of the room where I slept commanded a magnificent ravine, through which, when the waters were not pent up by the frost, rushed a rapid, foaming torrent, continually gathering magnitude by innumerable mountain-streams, sometimes bursting into light, and again losing itself between the pines which darkened its course, having their roots in the rocks which formed its channel. Across the valley rose a mountain, which obstructed the heavens to nearly one-third of the space from the natural horizon, being elevated several thousand feet above us, while the valley itself was as many thousand feet above the level of the sea; and though two miles distant, this mighty mass seemed, at times, to press painfully on the eye, yet the pine-woods seemed only as small specks upon its huge acclivities. But rock, and wood, and heath, and mountain-path were, at the time I mention, buried under the snow; and a mighty glacier, extending from fields of eternal snow on the summit of the heights, and descending between this principal mountain and another of nearly the same eminence on its left, was scarcely able to elevate its blue sparkling pyramids above the masses of fresh snow which had fallen from above.

Thus we were encompassed with snow on the morning appointed for the marriage; nevertheless the sun illuminated the heights, though the valley itself was partially shaded as we set out from the house to proceed to the village church. The bride and her female attendants were drawn in sledges, or carriages from which the wheels had been removed, and, as I before said, nearly the whole population of the village, all clad in their holyday attire, accompanied the procession, and the village bells were ringing. Their tones, it is true, did not equal those of the bells of our convent, but the sound was light and gay, at least we felt it to be such; and the peasants, as they followed and accompanied us, occasionally struck up a stanza of some hymn, choosing the subject in reference to the occasion, showing that marriage had been appointed in paradise, and was accounted blessed of Him who said, It is not good for man to be alone; and how the Saviour had applied the emblem to himself and his church, when her redemption

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shall be completed in the resurrection of all whom the Father has given him; thus using the figure in its Scriptural sense, in all holiness, and in a way which even the most daring scoffer could not have gainsaid; and not blasphemously and familiarly applying it to express the union between any single individual of the human race and the heavenly Bridegroom, as in the ritual of the profession of a religieuse under the Roman Catholic polity. For the church, the bride, is one: nor does she enter into that glorious and perfect union with her Saviour, shown forth by the espousals of our first parents in their state of innocence, till all her members have entered into glory, and the union of the whole body is complete. Then indeed will she be found spotless; then will she be endowed with his beauty, and be glorious in his glory.

The peasants had crowned themselves with holly, and acanthus, and broom: and as we proceeded, our numbers increased, insomuch that the little church, when we arrived therein, was quite filled, and every countenance was lighted up with joy, for the poor people were pleased with the choice which William, who was a sort of master among them, had been induced to make. The elders had known him from a child, and they hoped that he and his wife would be as kind to their children as his parents had been to them; and Pauline encouraged this feeling by the sweet graciousness of her manner. She was happy, and she was grateful to her God, and she used no art to conceal this feeling. She looked smilingly round on her poor friends; and I rejoice to say, that I have reason to believe those smiles did not promise more than she has been enabled to perform; for she has been a blessing, through the Divine assistance, to that solitary valley—that little world among the mountains.

I was much struck with the simplicity of the ceremony of marriage, and with the blessing afterward pronounced by the worthy pastor. It was impossible for me not to draw comparisons between the simple services of the reformed church, wherein more is meant than meets the ear, and wherein that which is divine and spiritual is contained under forms which are accounted of little importance; and that mode of worship of which the form is every thing, and in which the very deepest mysteries are handled by man, and made to subsist in vain and blasphemous ceremonies.

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We returned to the house as we had come; but we could not but remark, that the sun having arisen, during our continuance in the church, above the summits of the mountains, was now shedding its full blaze of glory on the valley, illuminating every snow-clad branch or bough, causing the violet and azure peaks of the glaciers to sparkle like heaps of jewels, and making the frozen streams to begin to filter through the rocks. The token was taken as a good one by the simple people, and a new hymn was raised on the occasion. Nor did we cease to sing till we had entered the hospitable mansion, and then what was to be done? We, the inmates of the house, were to administer to our humble friends from the ample store of good things provided by Madame d'Ivannois; and when all were fed,—and truly we had much to do to see that no one wanted,—the pastor assembled us in the hall, and spoke to us of the Divine goodness, not only exhibited in providing for all our earthly wants, but in that most excellent and ineffable work, by which the redemption of the believer is secured to him, independently of all his own works and deservings; and then taking up that word salvation, he enlarged upon it—he dwelt upon it—he expatiated upon it—till every one present melted with tears of joy and gratitude. Surely I never beheld a scene like that. So we dismissed our poor friends, and were glad of some refreshment ourselves; and Madame d'Ivannois had not neglected to provide an excellent supper, for it was sunset when we sat down to this meal; and we finished our day in speaking of the wonderful goodness of God, as especially manifested towards ourselves, the poor religieuses. Thus terminated this blessed wedding-day; but by this marriage I was naturally more separated from my own dear Pauline, and drawn more closely to Emily, and was, in consequence, induced to accompany her to England, when the melting of the snows had cleared the passes.

It was in the month of April that we tore ourselves from the dear family in Switzerland; and proceeding through Geneva and Mayence, in order to avoid France, we came down the Rhine to Holland, and there took shipping for England, meeting with only one adventure worthy of record during our journey.

We had stopped at a small town on Sunday, where we were at some loss to make ourselves understood,

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not one of the party being able to speak German. Our perplexity being great, the hostess went over the way in search of an interpreter; making us understand that there was a poor woman, a stranger, who had arrived there a few days before, and had been stopped from mere penury; not having wherewithal to carry her on to Mayence, where she expected to meet a friend. Conceive our astonishment, when this poor creature arrived, to find in her la Mère Genefride, dressed as a peasant, and reduced to the extremest poverty.

Oh, that was a joyful moment! I rushed into her arms. Emily did the same, though at the hazard of frightening the poor old religieuse into fits; for, as we found afterward, she was as little aware of the substitution of poor Agnace for Clarice, in the funeral ceremony, as I had been. From that time the troubles of the worthy old woman were at an end; she accompanied us to England, and never left us till the hour of her death.

She could give us little account of what had happened at St. Siffren after we had left it, having fled during the night of the uproar to the cottage of the peasant who had nursed Ella Rosa; from whence (having changed her dress) she had actually begged her way to the place where we had met her,—her object being to reach Madame Barthelemis, who resided at Mayence. She added that she had been laid up during the snow at Geneva, and had met with much kindness there.

It was at the end of a month from our leaving the house of Madame d'Ivannois that we arrived in London, and proceeded without loss of time to the house of Mr. Beaumont, in the beautiful county of Devon. There we found a handsome house, though not large, situated in a beautifully wooded park, having the ground diversified with gently swelling rises; for in England there are no mountains. Yet there are a deep verdure and richness of landscape, which make even a native of Piedmont almost ready to say, I can dispense with mountains. And all is so clean, and neat, and fresh, and consistent, that one is ready to exclaim, Surely this England is an earthly paradise! And then there is such a liberty of conscience—such an ease and freedom to do well, that there is no law that restrains in aught but in that which is evil.

And in the same parish, just beyond the woods, was a eautiful villa. It was small, indeed, but as elegant and

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fair as a vase of alabaster; and there resided the man to whom, as Mr. Beaumont often said, he owed, under God, many of those exalted views of religion which made him what he was. He had been a school and college friend of Edward, though some years older. Mr. Beaumont had given him the care of the parish in which he lived; and he was ready to receive his friend when we arrived. It will be expected that I should describe him, but I should find it difficult so to do, because there was nothing in him which struck the stranger at first but extreme humility and gentleness, added to great kindness of manner. His appearance, however, had all the elegance which proceeds from extreme refinement of sentiment—using that expression in the best sense of which it is capable; for it almost appeared to me as if true piety had particularly manifested itself in him, by rendering him one of the most blameless, elegant, and simple persons I had ever seen. It does not suit me to give his real name, I will therefore call him Theophilus—the signification of which name is well understood, and is as appropriate to him as to any one I ever knew.

We did not see him at first to advantage; he was under a cloud of natural grief, for it seems that he had lately followed to the grave a fair young sister who lived with him; they called her Lucy, and he still wore a band of crape round his hat, in memory of her. The return of his friend seemed to be a great consolation to him, and he was pressed to spend every hour with us which he could spare from his parochial duties.

Thus was the party with which we set out from Switzerland augmented; and being happy, most happy, among ourselves, we avoided other acquaintance, as much as neighbourly kindness would permit. The English are particularly suited to give charms to domestic life. I felt myself getting too much attached to this society, and asked myself more than once what I was about. We are poor weak creatures, and it is well for us that we should not be left to our own discretion.

But it may be asked, What did la Mère Genefride do among us? I reply, that she was very happy. She had an apartment to herself, and within it a light closet, and there the poor creature dressed up a sort of altar, and hung up a cross on the wall, and set up a waxen baby for a Virgin, decorating her altar with artificial flowers; and she kept this closet so shut up, that I had been

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some weeks in the house before I accidentally saw its interior.

I was much shocked at this discovery, and described what I had seen to Emily and her brother, and they were of opinion that we should still seem to be ignorant of the circumstance, but take every opportunity to engage the venerable mother in hearing the Bible and listening to true statements of doctrine. And as we feared lest she should tamper with the servants, Emily and I resolved to wait upon her and assist her to dress, by which we attached her more and more to ourselves; and although she never, till on her death-bed, acknowledged her entire conviction that Christ was all in all, and the Roman Catholic Church apostate, yet, some years afterward, getting another peep into the closet, I perceived that the cross, the image, and the artificial flowers had disappeared, and that nothing was left on the table but a green cloth, on which lay an open Bible, a hassock being on the floor before the table.

And now, my reader, how shall I, who was once a veiled and cloistered nun, venture to close my narrative. May I dare to say that the year of my novitiate, that is, the year which was dated from my becoming a sister of the white veil, was not concluded before I became the happy wife of Edward Beaumont: that I am now the mother of two sons, taller than myself, and of three daughters, namely, Emily, Pauline, and Agnace; that my sweet sister Emily was prevailed upon, some months after my marriage, to become the wife of Theophilus; and that my eldest son expects, with the Divine permission, to be blessed in a few weeks with the hand of his cousin Agnace, in whom all the graces, personal and mental, of her lovely mother, have bloomed afresh.

This marriage is waiting only for the arrival of Pauline and William, who are on the road from their sweet valley, with three of their family, the two elder of whom are sons, and the younger a daughter, named after me; and thus I terminate my history, trusting that those things respecting the Roman Catholic Church which I have faithfully recorded may tend to fill the inhabitants of this Protestant land with a sense of gratitude to that God who has liberated their country from the slavery of that great apostacy whose name is *Mystery*.

END OF THE NUN.

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INTIMATE FRIENDS.

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INTIMATE FRIENDS.

I AM now an old woman, and I hope that my friends would say of me that I am a steady, quiet sort of person, who is content to divide her time between her needlework, her household duties, her attendance on divine service, and a few visits to her neighbours. But the time was when I was a wild, unruly girl; and if not what is called wicked, it was altogether through the restraining grace of God, by which I was kept back from irrecoverably disgraceful actions; and by which my reputation, of which I took no care myself, was preserved for me until I was led to put some value upon it. But, as I much fear, if I began my little volume with long and serious discussions, that my young readers would throw it down before they had read many pages, I must omit further reflections, and proceed without loss of time to such passages of my history as seem most interesting to the public.

My father was a military officer, who, having seen much active service, retired, when about fifty years of age, to a little patrimony which he possessed on the borders of Wales, in one of the fairest though wildest regions of our lovely island.

Whoever may have chanced to see a little white house on the declivity of a hill, imbosomed in tufted trees where birds sing, leaves rustle, and waters murmur, may fancy such to have been my father's residence, for it was indeed a mere cottage, until two large and pleasant rooms were added to it when he first proposed to make it his abode. I was so unfortunate as to lose my mother when I was about ten years of age; but I felt this loss the less from having several sisters, some considerably older than myself, as well as some younger, and several brothers. Eldest sisters are sometimes a little tyrannical, but mine was the gentlest of gentle creatures, and as full of care for us all as if she had been

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our mother. She was as much as ten years older than myself, and between her and my youngest brother were as many as eight brothers and sisters of different ages. We were considered a fine family, and to this day I recollect all their figures, among which were several decidedly lovely faces, and not one that was not at least comely and pleasing.

Our dear father took much pains with our education, and if I was not all that a tender parent might wish, it was not his fault. His other children indeed gave him perfect satisfaction—they were good children; but I troubled him and my brothers and sisters very much, and all from one strange inclination which I had, and which I believe is common to wayward young people. This was the propensity which I always showed for keeping myself, in some degree, apart from my own family, in order that I might cultivate the friendship of other people; not considering that brothers and sisters are friends and companions appointed by the Almighty, and that, in most cases, they are fast friends, who, however selfish they may seem in some particular instances, cannot choose but to be interested in each other's welfare, inasmuch as each must be a partaker in the disgrace which happens to either. Hence, the advice of a brother or of a sister may always be welcomed as being more pure and disinterested than that of strangers; and if to the natural union of interests is added the sweet and habitual interchange of elegant courtesies, how infinitely dear must that bond become which unites them! and how delightfully, in such cases, is the intention of a tender Providence fulfilled! But with what carelessness or impatience do young people often rend asunder those natural ties which ought to bind them together as the sons and daughters of one common parent! and how often do we see the bitterest enmities among those who have reposed in the same cradle, and have been fostered on the same bosom!

As I before said, the great error into which I fell was the love that I had for forming intimacies with strangers. With these I suppose that I felt myself more easy than with my brothers and sisters; because these last were accustomed to tell me of my faults, whereas the companions whom I chose for myself found it more convenient and agreeable to sooth and flatter me, and to pass over what I happened to do amiss.

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My first particular friend was our housemaid. I was about eight years old when this intimacy began. I used to slip away from my sisters, and get to Susan whenever I could; and I had many opportunities, for my eldest sister, being then young and inexperienced, was not so watchful as an older person might have been.

It was happy for me that Susan was not a profligate girl, and that I did not derive so much evil from her society as I might otherwise have done; but, nevertheless, she gave me many strange notions. She was from the interior of Wales, and was very superstitious, so that she filled my mind with all sorts of frightful fancies about witches, and spirits, and candles burning about graves, and walking in procession, and omens, and prodigies, and lights seen in the woods on moonless nights. And though I now know the absurditiy of these things, yet to this day I cannot quite recover from the gloomy impressions which they made upon my mind. When I was about ten years old, my friend was sent away for admitting a gipsy into the house to tell her fortune, and for shutting her up in the pantry, where she pocketed a silver tankard. I was then like one utterly destitute of comfort, and cried, and fretted, and made myself so disagreeable, that those of my sisters who were about my own age were quite offended; and as I took no pains to conciliate them, the departure of Susan did not bring me much nearer to my real friends.

But here am I proceeding rapidly with my story, and have not yet told you my name. I could not think of troubling you with the names of all my brothers and sisters; for it will be sufficient for you to know that my name is Isabella, and that those of my eldest brother and sister were Robert and Sarah; while my father was known through all the parish by the title of the captain, there being no other captain within its precincts.

After Susan had left us, my heart remained disengaged for a short time, and I do not recollect to have entertained any other intimate friendship, until a sister of my father, who resided at Bath, came to visit us, and staid during the three summer months, when I was in my twelfth year. My aunt brought with her a maid-servant, whose business it was to dress her hair, and assist her in putting on her clothes: and I recollect that I was very much struck with the first appearance of

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Mrs. Jenny, when she stepped out of the carriage after my aunt. I thought I could not enough admire a yellow stormant gown with green trimmings and flounces, that she wore, which, it afterward appeared, had descended to her from her lady, and which, with a blue satin bonnet, seemed in my eyes to excel all that I had ever seen of the superb and the magnificent. It was some time, however, before I could venture to approach so great a lady: but one morning chancing to see her at work in my aunt's apartment, surrounded with strips of gauze riband and tiffany, out of which she was preparing a cap for her mistress, I ventured into the room, and being received very affably, we from that time became sworn friends. She soon contrived to get out of me as much of the history of the family as it was in my power to give her: and if I told her no secrets, it was because I knew none, and not on account of any discretion of my own, for I allowed her to make what remarks she chose upon my brothers and sisters, and even upon my father and aunt; and, after a short time, she gained such power over my mind, that I was more afraid of offending her than even of offending my heavenly Father. The consequences of this intimacy were more mischievous than those of the last. From Mrs. Jenny I learned all the gossip of the South Parade, where my aunt lodged in Bath; and when I heard of little girls like myself dressed in satins, and brocades, and wearing lace aprons, and gauze caps with artificial flowers, and going to plays and balls, and being admired at the dancing-school, and, what was still worse, at church, I became quite discontented, and thought myself very unhappy. I began to despise my white muslin bonnet and tippet, and my Sunday frock sprinkled over with strawberries half-hid in their leaves, which I once thought so pretty, and I no longer took any delight in the simple pleasures still so sweet to my brothers and sisters. A game at hide-and-seek in the woods, a feast of cakes and fruit in a natural bower, a dance under a tree, and a story told by my father or my eldest sister in the dusk of the evening, when we were all gathered round the glimmering light of a few embers, were things for which I had lost all relish long before Mrs. Jenny returned with her mistress to her gay home at Bath.

But the dearest friends cannot always be together

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The carriage was at length ordered to carry away my intimate acquaintance, and when I had watched it as far as my eye could follow it, I went into my own room, where I sat grieving, or rather sulking, until my father was under the necessity of rousing me by a lecture on my folly, added to which was a command that I should come and join my sisters, and pursue my usual employments.

My next friend was, at first sight, rather a more valuable one than any I had chosen before. She was a second cousin, who, having lost her mother, had been brought up in her father's house, under an old unmarried great-aunt, whom she had been in the habit of deceiving in many ways, the old lady being not only half-blind, but nearly deaf, and what was worse, so wholly addicted to card-playing that she could not get through a single evening without her pool at quadrille. Miss Bessy, my cousin, was, in consequence, by no means the person who was worthy to enjoy that place in my affections which justly belonged to my eldest sister, although she was more than a year older than my dear Sarah. Her father was an apothecary in a small country town, who, being often from home, knew little of the ways of his child; and, as her education had been entirely neglected, when she came to visit us she could scarcely write a note, stammered at long words when reading, and was skilled in no other arts than such as tended to enable her to dress better with her small allowance than she might otherwise have done.

But although so entirely ignorant of all intellectual, not to speak of spiritual, subjects, the mind of Miss Bessy was abundantly stored with the histories of many families, private as well as public. What a number of tales could she tell of family quarrels, runaway matches, undutiful sons, tyrannical fathers, silly mothers, and dishonest servants, and of other matters of the same description! and how clever she was in vamping old bonnets, stiffening old gauze, and contriving new trimmings! and, in fact, she entitled herself to my whole heart by trimming my white muslin bonnet with some pink gimp, found in an old store-chest which had belonged to my grandmother. From that auspicious morning Miss Bessy and I were inseparable, and she helped forward my education from the point in which Mrs. Jenny had left it; for, whereas Mrs. Jenny had

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only filled my mind and excited my ambition with the histories of pretty little misses who wore finer clothes and went to finer places than I did, Miss Bessy elevated my desires into a higher region, and made it very evident to my foolish young mind, that I was the most unfortunate of living creatures, in being obliged to live in the country and remain unseen, assuring me that there was no happiness on earth equal to that of being the belle of a country town.

These false and vicious principles, by continual repetition, sank deep into my heart, while the conversation of my new friend had no such effect upon my sisters; and for this reason, because they continually held together, and gave my eldest sister the opportunity of discussing and counteracting any improper sentiment which fell from the lips of their visiter.

At length Miss Bessy took her departure, and left me inconsolable.

It was on the departure of this my third intimate that my father, who had observed my weakness, reasoned with me most seriously on the ill effects that might be expected from the strange inclination which I always displayed for the society of strangers.

"I do not love an illiberal mind," said my father. "I do not like a person who has not charitable feelings for strangers, and who is cold and insolent to inferiors. The influence of charity should be like the beams of the sun, which extend themselves to all creatures within their reach; though more intensely powerful in immediate proximity. But," added my excellent parent, "the course of our affections may always be considered as perverted when they depart from that regular line appointed by Providence. Those whom the Almighty has given us as connexions, according to consanguinity, have the first right to our regard, and if some very serious cause do not exist for a departure from this natural duty, he that prefers another to his father, mother, wife, or child departs from his obedience to the Almighty. No such unfortunate reason exists in our family. Your sisters, Isabella, are at least equally worthy of your esteem with any of those persons whom you have chosen for intimates. I might venture to say that they are much more so, but even were they less deserving, I could not excuse you for forsaking them and preferring others, unless I had seen you attempt, and attempt in

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vain, to secure their affections and accommodate yourself to their tastes."

"But, papa," I replied, "they are so cross to me!"

"On what account?" asked my father.

"Oh, papa, it was only yesterday, when my younger sisters were working in their garden, that I went up to them, and stood by them, and they bade me go to cousin Bessy, for they did not want me."

"And why did they not want you?" inquired my father.

I rather hesitated to answer this question; but, after a minute, I replied, "Because they said that I should repeat to cousin Bessy every thing that had passed between them."

"Then it seems," replied my father, "that you have lost their confidence, and, in consequence, their friendship. The foundation of friendship is trust or confidence. We may pity, and perhaps even love, a person in whom we have no confidence, but we cannot establish a friendship with such an individual. Hence the formation of a friendship with a stranger whose fidelity we have not proved is like that of a house upon a sandy foundation, which may stand for a while, but is liable to be overthrown by the first gust of wind. Your first object now, Isabella, is to try to recover the confidence of your sisters, trusting that friendship will follow in its natural course; and be warned by me, that you will assuredly never regain that confidence, while you are observed to bestow your friendship, thus lavishly, on every stranger who happens to fall in your way." My father said much more to me on this subject; but I am sorry to say, that this good parent so entirely failed of bringing me to conviction, that, within a few months from the departure of my cousin Bessy, I engaged myself in another intimacy, the consequences of which were far more important than those of my former ones.

I have always remarked, that young instructers and managers of families, however skilful, dexterous, and well-principled they may otherwise be, are generally deficient in one point, and that point is watchfulness. One who has been long in the habit of command, and who has given his mind to the most difficult of all arts (the art of government), is quick in discovering the first deviations from propriety in those under his rule, and skilful in preventing and averting those beginnings of

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evil which, by neglect, would soon run on to serious mischief.

My father was often much engaged in his little farm and garden, and my mother was no more. All these things were against me: but they would not have been against me had I held together with the rest of the family. This, however, I never had been accustomed to do. I had been so spoiled by the flattery of my intimates that I could not bear the plain dealings of my real friends; and in consequence often took offence, and found some pretence for getting away, and being in any place but where my sisters were.

In order to have an excuse for following my own devices, I begged my father to allow me to keep some rabbits: and my dear parent very kindly caused a little hutch to be prepared for me at the very bottom of the yard, adding, with a smile, "I know, Isabella, you cannot exist without some intimate friends, and perhaps you may find in the friendship of your rabbits as much delight and less danger than in that of cousin Bessy or Mrs. Jenny."

My hutch was completed, my rabbits bought, and I attended them carefully through the winter; always pleading to my sister, when she missed me, that I had been feeding my rabbits: and thus the winter passed away, and the spring brought with it its sunny days, its perfumed flowers, its variegated buds, and its harmonious notes; but the progress of time also produced a series of new temptations for me. My father's house, as I before said, was situated on the declivity of a hill—the offices lying behind the house, along the slope of the eminence. Beyond my father's yard, which was encompassed with a rough railing and a filbert hedge, was a farm-house, which lay, with all its appurtenances, in a sort of hollow of the hill; so that it was not to be seen until a person had entirely come up to it. It was also much shaded with trees, and the lower part of the fence of our yard protected one side of the square and stiff, yet fruitful, garden of the farm.

This farm-house had been occupied for years past by a worthy old couple, who sat in an evening in a corner of their kitchen-chimney, and took their meals at the head of the long oaken dresser, in company with their dairy-maid and their labourers.

It had been the custom of our family to exchange

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visits with these our good neighbours once a year; and during the intervals of these visits, we had always found the farmer and his wife ready to perform for the captain and his family any act of kindness which lay within their power.

This worthy couple had only one daughter, who had married a person residing in London, and was the mother of several children older than myself. We had seen her several times, when she came to visit her mother, on which occasion she made a great noise in the neighbourhood by the smartness of her dress. The London lady had not, however, appeared for several years, when on Sunday, at church, Mr. and Mrs. Appleby, which were the names of the worthy old farmer and his wife, made their entrance into the village church, accompanied by a smart granddaughter of sixteen years of age, who was precisely one year older than I then was.

I could scarcely command myself sufficiently to seem to attend to the service, so entirely was I taken up with Miss Kitty's dress, every item of which I could now describe, though so many years have passed since that period; and if my reader will not be offended, she shall be favoured with a picture of it in as bright colours as my words can supply.

The fashion in dress at that time, which was about forty years since, was perhaps in worse taste than it ever was before or has been since. It was loose and flaunting without ease, and gaudy without magnificence and splendour.

Miss Kitty was, as it happened, the first person who had been fortunate enough to display these new modes in our part of the world, and undoubtedly she made a most extraordinary figure, seated in her grandfather's dusty pew, having the old lady her grandmother on one side of her, with her flat black silk hat and mob cap, and the old gentleman on the other, in a kind of gray homespun suit, and a tight white stock buckled round his neck. But to return to Miss Kitty's dress. In the first place, she wore on her head what was then called a balloon hat, covered with bright pink satin. A balloon hat was a sort of machine constructed of wire and silk, in a regular circle of such amplitude as to render the entrance of the wearer through a common-sized door a matter of some address. The crown of the headdress

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was constructed of a loose bag of silk made to bulge out like a melon, and the whole was so prepared as to catch every gale of wind, and erect itself from the face when caught even by the softest zephyr: and hence, no doubt, its name of balloon. Attached to the elegant head-dress displayed on this occasion by Miss Kitty, were a plume of feathers on one side, and a bunch of flowers on the other; and to fill up the interval between her face and the edge of her hat, was an immense profusion of hair, furiously frizzed and arranged in stiff curls. On her neck Miss Kitty wore a square handkerchief of tiffany, made to stand out under the chin by a machine of wire disposed beneath the tiffany, a machine which I had the honour of handling, and even of trying on some time afterward; while an immensely wide and full frill or furbelow of yellow gauze finished the bust. Miss Kitty's gown was of Indian chintz, trimmed with gauze, and so arranged that she appeared, like a wasp, pinched round the waist, while (in revenge, as one might say) her figure below the waist was made to look as wide and ample as paddings and flounces of every description could conveniently make it.

Never had I beheld any thing which so entirely overcame me as this figure of Miss Kitty's, when it first presented itself to my admiring and wondering eyes; and when she nodded to me across the church, on the strength of having seen me about six years past, I dropped a courtsy as low and as humble as if I had been paying honours to her majesty herself.

A few exclamations of surprise were all that passed in our family respecting Miss Kitty when we returned home, excepting that my youngest brother said that he should like to have her fine hat to make a kite of, and her flounces to tie to its tail. This indifference I much wondered at, for I thought that we should talk of nothing but this wonderful appearance for a week to come; but although I heard little said, and said little myself, of our humble neighbour's fine granddaughter, yet I thought of nothing but the balloon hat all the rest of the day, and no doubt dreamed of it during the night.

Several days passed after this without my hearing or seeing any thing of Miss Kitty, when one morning, as I was feeding my rabbits at the bottom of the yard, I heard a voice close by, asking me how I did.

I looked up, and saw Miss Kitty standing on a little

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mound, within her grandfather's garden, and peering over the paling: her hair was done up in papers, and she wore a sort of loose wrapper, in consequence of which she looked by no means so august, but, as I thought, much more accessible, than she had looked on the Sunday. I was, however, more than half-ashamed to be seen by her in the state I then was, for I had just been mixing up some bran and water for my rabbits, and my hands were plastered with the mixture.

"And so, miss," said Miss Kitty, "you are busy with your rabbits! Well, and a very pretty rustic employment it is; I love rustic employments. How I do wish we had a garden in Cateaton-street: but there are no gardens in town, not so much as one could plant a sprig of rosemary in. You can't think, miss, how fond I am of the country: and to lie in bed with the window open, and hear the cuckoo, is monstrous pleasant. They told me that I was to wish a wish, when I heard the cuckoo for the first time; and I heard it this morning, and I wished a wish. What do you think it was, miss?"

"Indeed," I said, "I can't tell."

"Why, it was—" she replied; "but do not laugh at me, miss,—it was, that you and your sisters would come and call on me; for do you know, it is so dull here at grandmother's, nothing to see, nothing to do, nothing but churning, and baking, and scouring, and milking, and all those sorts of things, and grandmother sitting on one side of the fire, and grandfather on the other, so dull, and nobody to be seen worth looking at. Could not you come now and then, miss, and let us have a bit of talk together? Do, miss, do come and see me."

"I will ask papa," I replied.

"Oh! I am sure your papa will be quite agreeable, miss," answered Miss Kitty. "But it is a long way about: could not you get over these here palings, and then you would be with me in no time? Here, just where I stand, you would only have to put yon bench as I see under that tree down there, and with one little jump you would be here in a trice, and it would be so pleasant. There is the old summer-house in the corner of our wall, we could go there, and then I could show you some of the fine things I brought from London. Do you know, miss, that I have got Charlotte and *Walter* worked in chenelles for my grandmother, which was done at school, and *Peter* weeping at *Flora's* tomb, to

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answer to it; and a filagree caddy, and a doll dressed in the last fashion, in a balloon hat and all; and several very nice books—there is 'The Sorrows of Sensibility,' and 'The Tears of the Heart,' and 'The Weeping Hero,' and 'The Rose of the Desert,' and several more: dear, I wish you would come and see them. Just lift that bench this way, and I will help you over."

I was not yet so far gone in undutifulness as not to make some little stand against this proposal. I felt that I had a chance of obtaining leave to visit Kitty in an open way, and that, though I had almost determined immediately to accept her invitation, I should certainly prefer doing it in a way which might be pleasing to my father rather than the contrary. I therefore declined climbing over the paling for the present, though not with that expression of dislike at the proposal which an upright girl would have shown; and hastened to the house to find my father, and ask permission to call on Mrs. Appleby's granddaughter. My father hesitated a little, and then granted me what I asked, on condition that I went accompanied by my eldest sister.

That very afternoon was chosen for our first visit; but it did not afford me the satisfaction I expected, for Miss Kitty was from home, and we saw the old lady only. The next day Miss Kitty returned the visit in her balloon hat, and was asked to tea; but, as my sister never left the room, and as Miss Kitty seemed under great restraint in her presence, I still found great dissatisfaction in the intercourse, and could not help feeling, that if we were to visit in this formal way, it would suit me quite as well not to visit at all; for I had no other idea of the pleasures of society than that they consisted in that sort of familiar gossip in which no secret is kept, and in which even the most absurd thoughts are revealed in unrestrained confidence.

A few days after this formal interchange of visits, I was again at my rabbit-hutch, preparing parsley and thistles, when I was saluted by a voice from the mound, and looking up, I saw Miss Kitty's face, encircled by curl-papers, peeping over the paling.

"Miss Bell, Miss Bell," she said, "do come near, I have something to say to you. Dear me, what would I give for half an hour's pleasant chat with you. I am almost moped to death in this place, and not a creature to speak my mind to: I am thinking I am like grand

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father's old owl, who sits all day winking and blinking on the great beam at the top of the barn. Well, but I have got a new 'Lady's Magazine' from town, and the very last fashions as are worn in the Park: and, do you know, they don't wear the balloon hats any longer of satin, but of tiffany: satin is counted too hot for June; and I am so vexed; I wish I had had mine of tiffany. I did think of it, but mother said there would be no service at all in tiffany in the country, and among the fields like: but do now step over these here palings, I'll give you a helping hand, and we will run to the summer-house through the filbert walk; the magazine is there; and grandmother will never know you are here, for she is as blind as a mole: now do come."

I made some few objections, but Miss Kitty soon answered them all; and so, to make my story short, I reached a little stool which was commonly used for milking, and setting it on one side of the paling, I climbed upon it, and got over with very little difficulty; I then ran with Miss Kitty to the old summer-house, and there I remained talking with her till I feared I might be missed; but, being afraid to return by the way I had come, lest any of my brothers should be in the yard, as they sometimes visited my rabbits, I made a circuit, and came round to my father's house in another direction. I had not been missed, and in consequence was encouraged to repeat my visit the next day, and, indeed, these visits and these conversations over the paling were so constantly repeated, that at the end of a very few weeks our intimacy had arrived at such a height, that, to use an expression taken from one of Miss Kitty's own books, namely, "The Sorrows of Sensibility," "there was not a thought in the breast of either which was not revealed to the other." Indeed, such was the ardour of my affection, and such my desire for explicit communication, that I might be said to have thought new thoughts, only that I might pour them out into the bosom of my amiable confidante: for I had thus reasoned with myself—"If my thoughts are not always such as a well-educated girl might be proud of, surely the avowal of them only exhibits the strength of my friendship in a stronger point of view; and how can any one doubt of the overpowering nature of that sentiment, which actually deprives me of the capacity of concealing even my most

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inmost feelings from her whom I have been led to select as the object of my most tender regards?"

But what, it will be asked, were my friends about, that I should be enabled so completely to elude their vigilance for so long a time? I will explain this. My eldest brother was from home; it was haymaking time; and the leisure hours of my father and my younger brothers were spent in the hay-field; and, more than this, we had a lady visiting in the house, who occupied much of the attention of my elder sisters. Thus I contrived for a time, perhaps for ten days or more, to pay a daily visit to my new friend, without incurring the slightest suspicion.

In the mean time, I had carried to my room and read all the books which Miss Kitty had brought from London. I had always slept alone, in a light closet within my sister's apartment, and I generally spent some hours in reading, every night and every morning, when the rest of the family were in bed. From these books I gathered a great deal which I did not know before. Among these pieces of information some few in particular dwelt much on my mind: to wit, "that parents and elder sisters are often the greatest enemies young people can have; that they have frequently no greater delight than to mortify them and counteract their most innocent desires; and that people, as they advance in years, often lose more wisdom by the indulgence of prejudices than they gain by the acquisition of experience." Besides reading these books, and gaining what I could from them, I had also acquired as much knowledge of fashionable life as could be supposed to proceed from Cateaton-street; and I had heard all the little tales of scandal belonging to Bilberry-house, the school near town where Miss Kitty had been educated. I had also attained some very pretty accomplishments, such as talking with the fingers, ornamenting boxes of wafers, writing notes with lime-juice, and other smaller matters which it is of no moment to reveal; and in return I had related all our family histories, described the singularities of every individual of our household, and done my best to make my friend infer that my sister Sarah was as great a tyrant in heart as Nero or Procrustes.

I had proceeded very successfully with my visits and conversations, till one day, when my father, happening to want me during one of my absences, and having

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called me himself for some time in vain, instituted a search for me throughout the domain (which, by-the-by, was not one of the widest), and sent every brother and sister I had to look me up. O what an uproar there was, when I had been some time called and searched for in vain! Luckily, however, as I then thought for me, the hounds were so loud in their cries after the hare that their voices reached me even in the summer-house, and I distinctly heard my youngest brother shouting, as they say, at the very top of his voice, in a triplet of his own composition,

"Bell! Bell! Sister Bell!
If you are in the well,
Be so kind as to tell."

What was to be done now? How was I to get back unobserved? I was terrified, and for the moment knew not what to do; but Miss Kitty, who had learned to manœuvre under more difficult circumstances at Bilberry-house, told me not to be uneasy, but to follow her. I did as desired, and when we came to the side of the paling which separated the yard from the garden, she directed me to walk almost double, in order that I might not be seen, while she took her station on the mound, and called to my little brother Henry, who was still shouting his triplet. "Master Henry," she said, "Master Henry, have you lost Miss Bell?"

"Yes, Miss Kitty," replied Henry; "we cannot find her anywhere."

"I heard her say, as I was walking along our filbert-walk a short time since," replied Miss Kitty, "that she had missed one of her rabbits, and she asked me to look for it on this side the paling, and I did seek it, but could not find it; and I then advised her to look down the close among the clover, and you had better go there after her: I doubt not but that you will discover her there, up to the knees in the long grass."

This hint was no sooner conveyed to Henry than he rushed from the yard, stopping all the persons he met, and turning them from that direction; while I lost no time in scrambling over the paling, and running to the house in a roundabout course.

However, as I could give but a lame account of myself, I was afraid of venturing again very soon into Mr.

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Appleby's garden, and, in consequence, did not see Miss Kitty for several days. At length, one evening, all my elder friends being in the parlour engaged with visiters, and my younger brothers and sisters being out of the way in another direction, I ran down the yard, climbed over the paling, and repaired to the summer-house, where, having made a sign which had been previously agreed upon, I was presently joined by Miss Kitty.

She did not bound up the steps of the summer-house in her usual lively manner, neither did she smile and run to embrace me in her customary style, but, coldly extending her hand towards me, she said, "Upon my word, Miss Bell, you are a mighty great stranger. It is now four days since I have seen you; and if you did but know what I have suffered in that time you would be sorry. I was so ill only yesterday that grandmother was obliged to give me some of her own drops, and I was the worse because I could not tell her my troubles; but, after such declarations of friendship as you made to me only the last time we met, to think that you could be so near to me, and never come *anigh!*" and thus lamenting, she fell into a violent fit of passionate tears, pushing away my hand when I offered to take hers, and declaring that she had never, in the whole course of her life, been so shamefully treated.

It was in vain that I pleaded fear of being detected in my clandestine visits. She would by no means hearken to such reasons, assuring me that if I loved her half as well as she loved me, I should never fear either friend or foe when I had it in my power to come to her; and she finished by telling me, that if ever I staid away so long again, she should not be able to answer for herself, but should certainly come to our house, seek my father or my sister, and ease her mind at once by telling them all that had passed between us, and imploring their sanction to the continuance of our friendship.

"Surely," I said, in great alarm, "you would not do that!"

"Not if I was in my right mind," she replied: "but I could not answer for myself if you were to neglect me again as you have done:" and then she added something about a wounded heart and friendship betrayed, all which had such an effect on my mind, and so strangely terrified me, that I neglected no means of soothing her; and I then engaged, that, come what

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would of it, I would either visit her daily or write to her, and throw my letter over the paling. She was soon appeased by these promises, and recovered her spirits; though nothing she could say relieved the uneasiness of my mind, for I now began to feel the weight of the chains which I had forged for myself. Yet the dread of detection made me afraid of breaking these fetters, which I might have done at once by making a free confession to my sister, who was my real friend. But how could I confess my gross folly? How could I acknowledge that I had made a stranger and an inferior the depositary of every family secret, of every silly and every undutiful thought? I thought it easier at that moment to go forward than to go back, for my intimate friend had already become my tyrant, though I tried to hide, even from myself, the real state of the case; and in this attempt to hide it I riveted my chains more closely.

For some days (the haymaking being over and our visiter being gone) I had no opportunity of getting into Mr. Appleby's garden; but I failed not to write every twenty-four hours, throwing my letters over the paling, and finding answers in a place agreed upon. My first note was written cautiously, but it brought a very reproachful answer, in which the writer complained very bitterly of my coldness, and used some of those alarming expressions which had frightened me so much in the summer-house. I tried to write the next in a less restrained manner, and in so doing did what every prudent person should avoid with the utmost care; that is, I committed myself in black-and-white, and thus, as it were, prepared such witnesses against myself as could never be controverted. In this my second note I complained of the excessive strictness of my father, and the watchfulness of my sister, together with the singular notions of my elder brother, who, I asserted, would never forgive me should he find out that I carried on any thing like a system of deception.

Miss Kitty's replies to my letters were written with much more art than I had used in my written addresses to her. She enlarged much on her delicate feelings and other matters, but mentioned no persons by name: hence she did not provide me with those instruments against herself with which I, on my part, so liberally supplied her. But it was not till some time afterward

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that I observed this; and thus I went on, getting more and more involved in the snares that were laid for me, till, at length, the crisis of my little history approached its consummation.

It so happened, that, for several days, I had not been able to visit Miss Kitty, and had not seen her over the paling, when, one morning, I found the following note in the accustomed place.—

"Have you quite forgotten me, Isabella? Are you changed? or were the professions you made me at one time utterly false? Say that they were so, and drive me to distraction! Say but the word, and I will come and throw myself at your father's feet, and tell how I have been deceived. But no: I cannot think you deliberately false to your adoring friend. Come to me, then—come to me this evening at six o'clock: I cannot excuse you. I leave it to you to account for your absence. If you are really the warm-hearted, the tender friend I take you to be, you will surely find some reason to plead for being from home. No tyranny, no bars, no bolts could ever have power to keep me from you. Why then do you hold back? Adieu, beloved of my heart. Your afflicted Kitty."

I was thrown into great confusion by this note, and knew not what I should do to elude the notice of my friends. I was, consequently, in great anxiety, and my mind was filled with various perplexing thoughts. Fortune, however, as I believed, favoured me; for while we were at dinner, my father proposed a walk, with all his children, to the next little town, about three miles distant; directing us all to be ready at four o'clock, and, at the same time, ordering the servant to have the supper prepared at nine precisely.

It was not very difficult for me, as I had learned to utter falsehoods without pain, to excuse myself from accompanying my friends on their proposed excursion; and I had no sooner seen them clearly off the premises, than I ran to my room, through my sister's chamber, seized my bonnet and tippet, and, passing back again, and perceiving my sister's watch, which had been my mother's, hanging at the head of her bed, I took it down and fastened it by its steel hook and chain to my side, thinking that it would be useful to indicate the hour when I must be back again. I then ran down the yard,

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climbed the paling, and was with Miss Kitty in the summer-house in a very short time.

Miss Kitty received me with great pleasure, and told me that she had sent for me to walk with her to cousin Dickson's.

This cousin Dickson was a farmer who lived in the next parish, and the father of a large family of grown-up sons and daughters, persons whom I well knew my father would not approve of for my companions. I was, therefore, I confess, much startled at this proposal, and made a variety of excuses, the principal of which were, that we did not visit the family, and that we might be met on the way by some one who might know me. Miss Kitty obviated these difficulties by saying that she would engage that none of her cousins would ever betray me, and that she would lead me through the wood in such by-ways as would secure us from all observation. Still I argued the point some time with my intimate friend, or, I should rather say, with my tyrant; but at length I gave way, and Miss Kitty and I set out, stealing first through the fold-yard of the farm, and then through the corner of an open field, till, at length, we found ourselves within the covert of a deep and tangled coppice, which extended along the side of the hill nearly as far as Mr. Dickson's fold-yard.

There was no great probability of our being met in the wood, for Miss Kitty led me through such by-paths as would almost have puzzled a fox; this, as I afterward found, not being the first of her stolen marches in that direction. In one place we leaped a ditch, in another we scrambled through a quickset hedge, and in another we fairly forced our way through a bramble bush; at the same time dipping over our shoes in a spring, whose secret course was concealed by marsh-mallows and other water plants. At length, however, e arrived at the farm, and were very cordially received, and had a very noisy evening, for we played a game at blindman's buff in the kitchen; and though my conscience twinged me several times, I was, to all appearance, as merry as the merriest of them.

At length, it was necessary for us to think of home, as we had more than a quarter of a mile to walk. Accordingly, at a quarter after eight, we broke up the party; and Tom and Dick, the two eldest sons of the farmer (whom I never heard mentioned by any other

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appellations), accompanied us part of the way through the wood, for fear, they said, of some gipsies who haunted those parts, and might, perhaps, be uncivil.

As Tom and Dick were partners in the mystery of my disobedience, it is not to be supposed that I was able to keep them at a very great distance during our walk, or to look very much offended when they ventured to call me Bell, and to drag me through the bushes as they would have done a sheep that had strayed. I had indeed strayed—and strayed very far; neither did I know how to get back into my fold.

At length, in the course of our walk home, we again reached the miry piece of ground; and, in attempting to avoid the wet, I got more awkwardly entangled among the brambles than I had been before, and was so torn and perplexed, that I verily thought all my clothes would have been stripped from my back before I could be set at liberty. However, with the assistance of my companions, I at length got free, and finding myself near home, I began to run, hastening onward, in what I considered the direct line, and fearing that I had been already too long delayed. My companions shouted after me, but I would not hearken to them, for I had calculated, by the long shadows of the trees, that the evening was farther advanced than I could have wished.

I was already at some distance from my escort, when a tall human figure presented itself at the entrance of a path down which I was about to strike. It was a woman, in a short petticoat and a tattered cloak; but as the light was at her back, I could not discern her face. In my haste I almost fell against her before I could recover myself, and indeed should have fallen, had she not caught me in her arms; at the same time using some exclamation which I did not understand. You may be sure that I recoiled with horror on finding myself in the arms of this ill-looking person, whom, when she spoke again, and called me by my name, I knew to be the same gipsy wife who had stolen the tankard, and who, when it was found upon her, only saved herself from severe punishment by pleading, with tears and bended knees, to the mercy of my father.

The shriek which I uttered presently brought Master Dick to my assistance; and I was really thankful for the offer of his arm through the rest of the wood,

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though it was as much as I could do to endure his coarse jests upon my adventure.

I was no sooner clear of the wood than I hastened home with breathless speed, and had hardly time to take off my bonnet and arrange my hair before my friends came home.

There was much to be said, while we were at supper, respecting the adventures which my dear father and his children had encountered in their walk. How often did one and another say, "I wish, Isabella, you had been with us: you have lost many great pleasures." There had been a show of wild beasts in the village, and papa had treated them all to see the lions, and my little brothers and sisters could talk of nothing else but of fiery eyes, wide mouths, grinning teeth, long tails, and crooked claws. In listening to these adventures I had begun to recover a little from the agitation of my mind, when suddenly I bethought myself of my sister's watch, and feeling on my side where I had hung it, I found with horror that it was not there.

No doubt I changed colour and looked terrified, for several of my sisters at once exclaimed, "What is the matter? look at Bell!" and my father, in great alarm, asked me if I were ill.

I answered that I felt sick, and Sarah rose immediately, took me up stairs, and put me to bed; where, when I had lain down, my father came up and gave me a little warm wine and water to drink; but neither wine nor medicine could reach the seat of my disease, which was in my heart; and the kindness of my friends only added to my anguish. I however pretended that I was better, and inclined to sleep, and my friends retired to their own apartments.

My little closet, as I said before, was within the room in which my two elder sisters slept, and when the door was open I could hear from my bed all that passed in their apartment.

On this occasion, I listened intently to all that was said, for I expected that my sisters would talk of me, and I was not mistaken: they spoke of my sudden illness, and Mary, my second sister, said that she thought I had not looked well for some time. Sarah agreed with her in this remark, and then they spoke in suppressed tones for a short time; after which, Mary, in her natural voice, asked Sarah what the hour was.

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"I will look," replied Sarah; "I left my watch at the head of the bed, for, as I knew that to-day would be the fair at S——, I thought it best not to take it with me."

A silence of a moment followed, while Sarah was seeking her watch, and then an exclamation, "It is not here! Bring the candle, Mary, perhaps it may have fallen among the bedding." I then heard a kind of bustle, and various expressions of surprise rising more and more into amazement, and shortly afterward both my sisters came to me to ask me if I had seen the watch. I felt now as if I must either stoutly assert that I knew nothing of it or declare the whole of my wicked behaviour. Of these two ways I chose the worst, and asserted that I knew nothing at all respecting it.

The bell was then rung by my sister, and an old servant, who had long resided in the family, was called up and questioned. She replied, that she saw the watch hanging at the head of the bed when she came up to receive some orders previous to my sisters' going out, but that she had not seen it since, having been occupied in ironing with the other servants in the kitchen.

Sarah was so uneasy that she could not think of going to bed till she had applied to my father, and brothers, and other sisters. The alarm was now given, and every hole and corner of the house was searched. I was questioned again and again, as I was supposed to have been at home all evening; but no information could be got, and everybody went to bed in a very uncomfortable state of mind. The next day brought no more satisfaction respecting the lost watch than the night before. New researches were made, but no watch was to be found. Every box, chest, cupboard, and drawer was turned over, and I pretended to be one of the most forward in making the search. But when all efforts proved useless, my sister was obliged to accommodate herself to her loss as well as she could, though she certainly felt it deeply, because it had been her mother's watch. And there was also a worse effect than this produced. The watch was certainly gone, and gone out of my sister's room, and it could not have gone without hands: consequently, some one must be guilty. The servants, therefore, feared that they were suspected, and thus became dissatisfied and uneasy, so that the peace of the family was greatly disturbed, as indeed

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must inevitably be the case in every household where a thief is harboured.

In the mean time I was afraid of renewing my visits to Miss Kitty. But I wrote to her to tell her, the history of the watch, which evidently alarmed her for she did not press me to come to her for several days.

I had no doubt in my own mind that I had lost the watch in my rencounter with the gipsy, and I consulted my intimate friend on the best way of forcing the old thief to give it up without making the affair public. In her answer to my letter on this subject, Miss Kitty promised that she would consult her cousins Dickson, and told me that I had nothing to do in the mean time but to keep myself quiet. I was rather comforted by the letter which brought me this assurance; but a second letter, which informed me that Tom and Dick had examined and threatened the gipsy in vain, threw me again into the greatest perplexity.

Several weeks passed on without bringing me any comfort, when my father and my two elder sisters were called to Bath, to my aunt, who was very ill; and the family were left in the care of my elder brother, who was, at that time, at home for the long vacation.

My brother was very busy and very authoritative in his new office, and kept us all in excellent order, as full authority had been given him by my father, till, one day, two of his university friends appeared at our door, each with a small knapsack on his back, proceeding on a pedestrian excursion through Wales. They staid one night, and entreated my brother to accompany them on the next day's march; in consequence of which he was tempted to leave us, with the intention of sleeping out one night, and returning home the following evening. He was the more satisfied in leaving us, because we were then very busy with a dressmaker (or mantuamaker, as we used to call persons of this description forty years ago); and he took two of our brothers with him, in order that there might be fewer at home to make mischief.

Having seen my brothers depart with their young friends, I proceeded to feed my rabbits, and was there accosted by Miss Kitty, from her usual exalted post.

"So they are gone, Bell!" she said (I was Miss Bell no longer); "I saw your brothers over the field from my bedroom window, and I expected you would be with the

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rabbits. Well, but you will be able to get out this evening, and we will go to cousin Dickson's. There's the Miss Joneses from Llandhfit, and young Simson from the Rock Mill, and two or three more to be there to-night; and we are to have a dance on the green, and a syllabub, and all; and you must come, and I will take no denial. You must be with me at four o'clock, and Tom says he will meet us in the wood."

"Oh! no, no!" I exclaimed; "I have had enough of your schemes. I have never known peace since that miserable day when I lost the watch."

"But," replied Miss Kitty, "I was going to tell you, Tom says he thinks he has heard something about the watch, but he says he must reveal it to you his own self, for it is a secret; he won't even tell me."

Here was a temptation indeed. Yet I resisted it for a while; and then Miss Kitty, seeing me more firm than she expected, had recourse to some of those devices which she had not unfrequently used before with so much effect. She complained of the coldness of my affection, spoke of a time when I had been all heart, and warmth, and confidence, and reminded me of certain communications I then made to her, which she well knew that I should not wish to have revealed. Thus she let me feel that I was in her power, and I did so far feel it that I gave way to her proposal, although I trembled at what might be the consequences of this second gross act of disobedience.

At four o'clock I complained of a headache, and talked of taking a walk; one of my little sisters proposed accompanying me, but I told her that I had rather be alone: and thus having made my escape, I took a new bonnet in my hand, which my sister had sent me from Bath, ran down the yard, climbed over the paling, and was with Miss Kitty in a very short time. She was waiting in the summer-house, neatly dressed; and, as it was desirable that I should be got out of the premises without being observed, she led me through many circuitous ways, till at length we found ourselves within the shade of the woods; there we speedily met with our friend Mr. Thomas Dickson, whom I immediately questioned respecting what he had learned of the fate of my watch. The young man immediately began to tell me how he and his brother had questioned and threatened the old gipsy woman; adding, that if I would

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consent to let him take her before a justice, we should be sure of the stolen goods again; but to this I could never consent. While we were still speaking on this subject, we heard a rustling among the underwood, which made me start and look around; but seeing nothing, we passed on, and soon reached the farm. All that Miss Kitty had promised me respecting the gayety of the evening was fulfilled. We had a dance, a poor blind traveller being our musician, and were regaled with all sorts of dainties. Those who were there by the consent of their parents were perhaps happy, and really enjoyed themselves; but I was miserable. Yet I danced and laughed, and talked, and perhaps laughed and talked the more because I was miserable: for "in much laughter," as the wise man says, "the heart is often sad," and those are often the most happy who would almost be thought dull in the eyes of a careless observer.

At length it was necessary for us to return: but just as we were about to set out, a violent summer-storm of rain came on, which delayed us nearly an hour, and at length, when it abated, we resolved to lose no more time; but Miss Kitty and I were both in pain lest our hats should be spoiled. Mrs. Dickson, who was a careful, well-meaning person, though she did very wrong in receiving me without the knowledge of my parents, insisted on lending us two old hats and cloaks; and having pinned us up, and dressed us in the articles I have mentioned, we set out, accompanied by the ploughman carrying a lantern, the young Dicksons being so much engaged with the rest of the visiters as not to be able to accompany us.

The wind whistled drearily through the wood as we entered it, and the rain pattered among the leaves, the water falling in heavy drops from every brake and bush by which we brushed our course. The ploughman, a foolish, gaping, red-headed youth (who by-the-by was very much out of humour at the prospect of having to return through the coppice in the dark), walked before us with his lantern, while we followed in silence, even Miss Kitty being sensibly uneasy at having to walk out so late.

We had arrived in the middle of the wood, when a low whistle met our ear on one side, which was immediately answered by another on the other; and at the

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same moment the horn lantern was struck out of the hand of our guide, and extinguished: a kind of scuffling noise then ensued, and the ploughman, feeling some one busy about him, began to strike and scatter his blows in every direction, with so little caution that I and Miss Kitty had no small share of them.

What had we to do in such a situation but to scream for help! and, in truth, we made the woods ring again with our cries, for we did not doubt but that we were thus assailed by the gipsies, nor were we much at a loss to account for the cause of their displeasure against us. It was indeed but recently that the mother of the gang had been charged with stealing my watch, and threatened severely on that account; and we ought to have been very careful how we exposed ourselves to the attacks of these unprincipled vagrants. But to proceed with my story.

Such was our excessive alarm and confusion (being left in total darkness), that, when we felt the blows of the ploughman, we were quite incapable of distinguishing friends from foes. We knew not which way to run; and indeed if we had known the way, we should probably have been little better off in our extreme embarrassment. As it was, we soon got so entangled in the brakes and brambles, being, at the same time, enveloped in total darkness, that we could neither advance nor recede; and, for my own part, I was so wholly overpowered with fear, remorse, and shame, that I should almost have rejoiced if the earth had opened and swallowed me up.

Miss Kitty, in the mean time, continued to shriek, while the ploughman, who was as little able to retreat as we were, began to use such language as is common to such people when in anger and fear. This was our situation, when suddenly a light glimmered through the trees, and the next minute brought several persons hastening towards us with a lantern, and crying, "What is that noise? Who is there? We will see that no one shall be hurt with impunity!"

"It is Dick and Tom," said Miss Kitty, recovering herself, and raising her voice; "this way, this way—help! help! we shall be murdered!"

The persons bearing the lantern advanced; and Oh! conceive my horror, when I recognised my brothers, who had returned sooner than they had intended, and

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in a direction I had not expected. Terrified as I had been before, I then thought that I should have actually fainted. I supported myself with the stem of a tree near which I stood, and drew my bonnet over my face. My brothers approached, and recognising Miss Kitty, they addressed her politely, and asked what had terrified her.

"We were returning home," answered Miss Kitty, "I and my friend"—and then she hesitated, perhaps recollecting for the first time how this friend was connected with the gentlemen to whom she was speaking.

My eldest brother waited a moment that she might proceed, and then addressing the ploughman—"What has alarmed you, my honest friend?" he said. "You are a pretty champion for ladies, indeed: you look as white as your own frock!"

"And well might I, my master," replied the young man: "to be attacked as I went quietly along about my business to take care of these misses to their homes, and have my lantern all broken to pieces, and forty fists at least applied to my shoulders! I should like to know if it was not enough to make a man's cheek look white! But if I am not even with them gipsies, my name is not Timothy."

"The gipsies!" said my brother; "what should they have meddled with you for?"

"What for?" replied Timothy, "what for? ay, that's the question; but the blows were not meant for me; I knows that very well. If they had fallen where they were intended, somebody else's shoulders would ache now, instead of mine. But I told Master Tom how it would be, when he was always threatening them about that bit of a timepiece which he says they nabbed."

"What timepiece!" asked my brother.

"Nonsense! hold your peace, and go on, Timothy," said Miss Kitty, interrupting the peasant.

"What timepiece!" repeated the young Oxonian, sternly.

"That bit of a watch that miss there lost," replied the ploughman.

My brothers all turned to me on hearing this.

"What miss!" inquired my brother.

"Why, that un," replied the boy.

"That one!" said my eldest brother, as he stepped

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across the path, seized my hand, and compelled me to show my face.

Never shall I forget his exclamation when he recognised me. Nothing but a brother's love, in an honourable mind, could have inspired such an expression of horror, shame, and anger. He stood before me in all the majesty of youthful and manly dignity, and seemed to me, as he uttered his stern reproof, like the angel Gabriel as described by Milton when he reproved the archfiend.

Never shall I forget the manner in which he asked me what I did in that place, and the noble severity of countenance with which he awaited my reply.

I was unable to look up to him for more than a moment. At length I fell on my knees before him on the dripping ground—I implored his mercy—I promised him I would tell all. I assured him of my repentance and shame.

My other two brothers were touched with my sorrow, and entreated him to forgive me.

He raised me up; but it was in a cold and angry manner that he placed my arm under his. He directed Miss Kitty to walk before him, telling her that he would see her safe into the care of her grandmother; then bidding the ploughman light his shattered lantern and return home, and requesting his younger brothers to walk on each side of Miss Kitty, he caused us to proceed without further loss of time. There was something solemn and imposing in our silent march towards home. We were all struck dumb, with the exception of Miss Kitty, who attempted twice to interrupt the silence by some ingenious explanation of the situation in which we had been found.

"If you have any explanation to make, madam," replied my brother, "it is not due to me, but to your grandmother. When I have seen you under her protection, I shall consider that I have done my part by you. It is from my sister that I shall expect to hear the account of the strange scene of this evening."

Even Miss Kitty, with all her effrontery, could not resist the dignified and cold manner of my brother; and as to myself, I was ready to faint, and should hardly have been able to support myself had I not held on my brother's arm.

When arrived at Mr. Appleby's, we knocked and stood at the door till we saw Miss Kitty enter. My

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brother then led the way, and we walked in silence to our own house. There, being brought into the parlour, he, as I had expected, began to call upon me to explain the events of the evening. "And first," he said, "what have you done with your sister's watch?"

This question, at least in the direct manner in which it was put, I certainly did not expect; and I again fell at my brother's feet.

"Kneel not to me, sister," he said. "It becomes me not to suffer it; but, rather, make me your friend. I am grieved, I am wounded; but I still love you. Make me your friend, confess every thing, and trust me to make your peace with our father."

Thus, being so kindly invited and urged, and being pressingly and affectionately entreated by my two other brothers who were present, I disclosed every thing, and, as far as I could recollect, concealed no single instance of my delinquency. And having so done, I felt immediate peace, and was consoled by the tender embraces of each of my excellent brothers.

"And now, my Bell," said my eldest brother, "now that I have found a sister that was lost, you shall be made happy in knowing what else we have found." So saying, he drew from his breast our mother's watch, which he informed me they had discovered hanging in a thicket, near a marshy piece of ground, in the very depths of the wood, through which, they added, they should never have been able to make their way, had they not borrowed a lantern at a cottage at the entrance of the thicket.

How did I rejoice at that moment, not only to see the watch, but to think that I had confessed the whole truth to my brother! And this excellent brother was faithful to his promise, and made my peace with my father. But my intimate friend was, from that time, entirely lost to me: and as I never chose another, in preference to my own family, I never again fell into any of those disgraceful errors of which I have given so exact a narrative in the foregoing pages.

And now, my gentle reader, let me conclude my narrative by cautioning you to avoid those hot and hasty friendships of which young people are so fond, and the consequences of which so many have found occasion to lament, not only for a few weeks, but through the course of a long life.

END OF INTIMATE FRIENDS.

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MY AUNT KATE.

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MY AUNT KATE.

THE following short narrative was written by the desire of the lady whose name is given above, with the especial intent that what is here related may be of use to parents and guardians who may be engaged in settling their families in the world, and as a warning to such as, being themselves professors of religion, allow worldly sentiments to intrude into their conversation, contrary to the command of Scripture,—*Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.* Phil. i. 27. For, as my aunt very properly observed, there is much more danger to young people in counsels of a worldly nature, proceeding from persons esteemed religious, than from the mere worldling. Christians are under the greatest obligation to avoid all sentiments which may inspire high thoughts, inflame covetous desires, or raise discontented feelings; and they should be specially careful lest, while they discountenance unlawful amusements, they cling to that worldly and ambitious spirit which constitutes, in general, the sin of those amusements.

But, to explain my purpose more clearly, I will relate those facts which will speak for themselves.

I am a clergyman; of more than thirty years of age; and have seen much of the world, while chaplain in a vessel of the line, and in other public situations. I was married to my first wife immediately on my ordination. I lived with her little more than four years, when I was deprived of her by death, and left the father of two daughters. I felt the loss of my wife, young as I was, the more on account of my infant children. They were, however, adopted by their maternal grandmother; and it was at that period that I entered upon the life of a chaplain in the navy.

During the four or five succeeding years, I saw but

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little of my children: and at the end of that time, my views of religion being changed, I became anxious for such a situation as might enable me to live in retirement, to study my profession, and preside over the education of my children.

My earnest desires and secret aspirations on these subjects were not disregarded by my heavenly Father. I was unexpectedly endowed with a small living in a country place; and was scarcely inducted, when I saw again a young lady whom I had known in former years as a child, and who, though much younger than myself, appeared to me to be a person calculated to make my little parsonage like the Garden of Eden. I thought I had found in this young lady piety combined with cheerfulness, intellectual elegance with humility and ease, accomplishments without pretension, kindness without ostentation, and loveliness of person without vanity. I was not mistaken: in a great degree, all these qualities were united in this amiable individual. I obtained the prize: and, as the young lady was an orphan, and residing with a worthy guardian, more was not required of me than was just. Preliminaries were soon settled; we were married, and went immediately to our parsonage, which as yet remained in the rough state in which I had found it, my young wife having justly observed that we should have much pleasure in arranging all things to our own taste.

In the mean time, my little girls having lost their grandmother, had been placed at school; and as a few weeks only were wanting to the holydays when we arrived at our parsonage, we deferred the pleasure of seeing them for that short period, that we might get over a little of the bustle of arrangements.

I must confess that I had some small apprehensions when, in the evening of the third day after our marriage, having been travelling from six in the morning, our hired chaise had attained the brow of an eminence, from which the parsonage-house was first seen, standing in a garden richly decorated with gooseberry-bushes and cabbage-stumps; for the late incumbent not having resided there, the place had been occupied by farmers; the appearance of the house was but ordinary, and though sufficiently roomy and substantial, there was no display of taste or fashion.

I stole a glance at Lucy at the moment this object,

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then about half a quarter of a mile distant, burst upon our view, being assured that she must already have recognised her future home by its vicinity to the church, whose pretty gothic tower rose on the other side of the garden-wall. There was an expression of interest and curiosity in her countenance, but at the same time a placidity which augured well.

"Do you see the parsonage, Lucy?" I said.

"I do," she answered; "but why did you describe it as you did?"

"I told you it was but an ordinary place, my dear," I replied.

"Ordinary!" she repeated; "why, it only wants planting, and painting, and cleaning, and then it will be a delightful abode. For look round you; what a lovely country! see what orchards, and meadows, and little hills, and delightful lanes, winding in all directions! I am sure there are violets in those lanes. And what lovely little coppices here and there! And then it will be so pleasant for us to put our garden in order! And we will have a porch over the door, and train honeysuckles before it; and we will have beds of flowers, nosegays of flowers, and bow-pots full of flowers. You remember what Herbert says—

'Flowers are the country parson's jewels.'

Much more she added, and talked till her lovely face was all in a glow; while I (my mind being relieved from the apprehensions which had weighed upon it all day) more than partook of her gayety, and if ever I lifted up my heart in feelings of love and gratitude to God, it was at that moment.

My dear wife approved of every thing about our new abode which was approvable; and, as if she had provided the place for me, and not I for her, she apologized for all that was amiss, saying every now and then, "You will be more comfortable when your books come, and the furniture is unpacked, and we shall have such pleasure in putting things in order!"

"But, my love," I sometimes would answer, "you know that our income is small, and we have but little to make our house comfortable with."

"We have every thing we want," was always her reply; "and things will look so different when the gar-

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den is cleaned and the flowers grow, and all are neatly arranged."

"I am only afraid for you, Lucy dear," was my frequent answer..

"And what for?" she would reply: "I have all I need; and I can wait for any little thing that may hereafter be necessary till we can afford it better: and so pray let us say no more on this subject. What is so rich as contentment?"

I was at length persuaded to lay aside my apprehensions. I set to work with my Lucy, to make the best of what we had; and presently, in the enjoyment of all the comforts and decencies of life, soon forgot that there were such things in the world as luxuries and vanities. I was astonished to observe how, within a few weeks, the directing genius of Lucy shed a kind of simple elegance over our humble dwelling.

I have often remarked that the very walls and furniture of a house seem, in some unaccountable way, to accord with the taste of the inhabitants. There was not a single article of elegant furniture in my study; but the bookcases were scarcely put up, and the carpet laid down, before a reflecting visiter would have discovered that there was a superior mind presiding over its arrangements. And if this appeared within the house, how much more so in the garden, where the materials for decoration are so beautiful, so various, and so abundantly provided by a kind and gracious Providence!

We had not been more than a month in our house, when the time of the arrival of my little girls drew near. They were in a remote part of the kingdom; but they were to be brought within the distance of a single stage by a friend travelling from the place where they had resided. Owing to the hurry of business, I had not seen them for many months, and my wife had never seen them. You, my reader, may therefore imagine that we were both impatient for their arrival. But while I counted the hours, my wife testified her impatience in a way which marked at once the tenderness and youthful vigour of her feelings, as well as the various kind preparations which she made. On the day previous to that on which I was to go to meet my children, I found her assisting in preparing little tarts and pastries for them. She also emptied a small cupboard under my book-shelves, and insisted that it should be

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left for the use of my little girls. In this she placed such toys as children love, and a few small volumes in gilt covers, and reminded me that it would be pleasant for them to play in their own corner, while we, the old people, were talking gravely together over the fire or at the table.

"Gravely! and when do you talk gravely, my beloved?" I said.

"O! often," she replied. "But where is the merit of being grave? why should I be grave, when every thing about me is so gay?—the flowers, the birds, the hills, the trees, my pleasant parlour, and my happy home! And then the feeling that all these things are the gift of a bountiful God—of a beloved Saviour! Why should I not be gay?"

"But the word gay, Lucy dear," I said, "is often applied to bad characters and lovers of earthly pleasure; and therefore I don't like it."

"And the word serious to good people," she answered, "and therefore I ought to like it. But both words are, in my opinion, misused; because I would rather call the religious people the gay ones, and the worldly people the serious ones: for people without religion," she added, "cannot be happy, unless they are in a bustle, and in scenes of strong excitement; while religious persons are often most happy when they are alone and quiet, or in some retired corner, or when nobody knows or cares any thing about them."

I could not but agree with the general tendency of this observation, but remarked, that there were times and seasons in which pious persons must be weighed down and rendered sad by a sense of sin.

She looked up at me with a glistening eye, and said, with a gentle sigh, "Ah, yes! I know it; but without sin this world would be like heaven itself."

The next day I set off at an early hour to fetch my little girls, leaving my wife to expect us in the evening. I could say much, were it to my purpose, on the delight I experienced in again meeting with my Mary and Rosa (the elder of whom was not quite seven years of age), and of the long stories which I told my little smiling ones on the road, about the new and pretty mamma they were to expect at home. Much also might be said about the joyful reception which was given us on our arrival at home, and of the pleasing repast of strawber-

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ries and cream which was spread for us on my study-table, with the many evidences of a heart desiring to love and be loved displayed by Lucy towards my little girls. But I forbear. Yet these are the things which render life comfortable: for our state on earth is not, as the writers of romance would lead us to expect, a series of important and striking scenes, which make the blood to boil and freeze by turns; but a continued succession of little circumstances, closely connected together, and forming one important whole, like a well-shaded and masterly picture. The great art of life is to acknowledge and enjoy the liberality of Providence, and to indulge in feelings of love and thankfulness; and to enjoy what may be enjoyed to-day, without encroaching on or borrowing from to-morrow. It also appears to me, that human nature is so constituted that any strong excitements, however pleasurable, are surely and naturally followed by pain. Hence those are found to be the best and most agreeable companions in domestic life who have the art of providing amusements and occupations of a simple nature, and promoting mutual edification and comfort from the purest sources of enjoyment. And this art was understood by my beloved wife to a degree which I have seldom witnessed in any of her sex.

As soon as my little girls were settled in their new home, she began to assist me in carrying on their education, bringing them forward rapidly, without using any other chastisements in case of ill behaviour than depriving them of the pleasure of accompanying us in our walks. She had a variety of galas and treats for them and for me: indeed, what treat could I have superior to a walk with her to visit a cottage in some of the sweet seclusions within our parish, while my little ones gambolled before us and behind us, on the right and on the left. And then to return home, to partake of a dish of tea prepared by my Lucy; to read aloud some favourite author; and finish the evening with prayer and praise! If this was not happiness, I know not what it is. Moreover, we had our winter enjoyments as well as our summer ones, besides those which were common to both seasons. Our little parties round the fire in twilight, when every one was obliged to tell a story in his or her turn; our various occupations after tea, and the more serious business of pricking and roasting apples for our supper; and then, when at the end of one happy twelve-

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month a little brother was added to the family party, who was at first to lie very quiet on mamma's lap, and not to be disturbed, and soon afterward could sit up and look about him, and laugh when his sisters peeped at him over his mother's shoulder; why, it seemed that our cup of joy was running over, although, as it afterward appeared, we were destitute of almost every thing necessary to our comfort; and, what was worse, could never be thoroughly convinced of our unhappy state, though our good aunt Kate very kindly undertook to make us sensible of our condition, and might, indeed, in some degree have succeeded with me, had I not been blinded by the prejudices of my wife, as is too often the case with married men.

"I have a letter from my aunt Kate," I said to Lucy, on my return from the post-town one day in the latter end of August. "She proposes to visit us within a few days."

Lucy's disposition was naturally hospitable; and she answered with glee, "Well, I shall be glad to see her. I hope she will like me; and I am sure she will be pleased with our baby."

She then asked me several questions respecting her; to which I answered, "She is about fifty, is a widow, has a handsome fortune, is much devoted to do good, and is, as I have understood, decidedly pious."

"A sensible woman, no doubt," remarked my wife.

"A very sensible woman," I replied, "and one whom I would have consulted when I wanted a female friend before any one I know."

Here the conversation dropped, but not so my Lucy's hospitable intent; for she gathered her finest flowers to decorate our best sitting-room, and drew her finest sheets from their repository among bags of lavender.

My aunt was expected in the evening; and the former part of the day fixed for her arrival is imprinted on my memory in the fairest colours. My beloved aunt is now a different creature from what she then was. Her presence is now no interruption to our domestic peace. I can speak of her as she then was, without seeming to touch upon her character as it now is. But to return to our happy day.

In order that we might regale our visiter at supper in a better manner, I was, it seems, to be content with an humbler dinner. We spent the morning in my study

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It was hot weather, and the window opened into our garden, which already began to blossom and shed its sweets, under the fostering care of Lucy. My little girls and their mother were busy with their needles, finishing something which was to be worn in the presence of our aunt, and I was engaged with my sermon for the next Sunday, from time to time reading portions of it aloud, and submitting certain parts of it to the superior and pious criticisms of my wife.

Our senses were regaled by the perfume of the flowers, and the hum of bees; and a feeling of pious gratitude was renewed in my heart when I looked on the placid and lovely countenances of the step-mother and her children.

We dined early; Mary laid the cloth, and Rosa arranged the knives and forks. After dinner we walked out, choosing our way beneath the shade of a small coppice. There we visited a cottage, where I prayed with an old woman, and Lucy administered to her temporal wants. We stopped on our return to listen to a blackbird, and sat down on a bank and discoursed upon the goodness of the Almighty, as especially displayed in rural and solitary scenes.

Our best tea-things were arranged in our best parlour, with a sufficient store of white bread and cream, when we arrived at home; and Lucy had scarcely time to visit her little boy, before a chaise arrived at the door, and my aunt Kate was introduced.

I shall describe my dear relation precisely as she then was. Her mind had been turned to religious subjects about eight or ten years, and it cannot be questioned but that *the root of the matter* was in her. But then she had always lived, not in the gay or great world, but in that sort of town society where much stress is laid upon accustomed forms and observances, and much importance given to certain fashions and established modes of living. My aunt's views of religion and of the world were both contracted. She had a great aversion to what she called inconsistency; but she had her own ideas of consistency, and looked with more dread upon a game of cards, or an accidental dance among young people, than upon a tale of scandal, or a covetous or ambitious desire. Still there was much pious warmth in her manner, and much proof of right feeling; yet, when any of her prejudices or preconceived opinions

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were touched, she shrunk, like a snail into its shell, and became cold, haughty, and severe. She was, in fact, though she knew it not, excessively self-righteous, and exceedingly wedded to her own opinions; and was not, till many months after that period, brought down by Divine grace to the truly humble and contrite state in which the security and happiness of a Christian consist.

Such was my dear aunt Kate when she first entered our retired dwelling. There was cordiality in her first address; she seemed to enjoy the refreshments we had prepared; and, on Lucy's leaving the room, she expressed herself as more than satisfied with my choice, saying, that she had seldom seen so much simplicity united with so much taste and intelligence.

Thus all went on smoothly at first; and I was entirely unconscious of what was to follow. I knew that my aunt partook of supper, and Lucy had prepared a roasted fowl. Things were arranged on the table with neatness; and my aunt's countenance expressed satisfaction, as I believed; for I was anxious to please her.

At ten o'clock, Lucy, with a lighted candle, attended our relative to her bedroom; and, as she always breakfasted in bed after a journey, her niece carried up her breakfast in the morning, and took our little George to visit her, who, having had a sleepy fit the evening before, had not yet been introduced.

At dinner, as at supper the night before, things were neatly arranged, and suitably provided; and my aunt introduced several things on the subject of religion, which I thought delightful; yet, with these were mingled certain sentiments which sunk like lead upon my heart, while I scarcely knew wherefore; but they, most certainly, laid a stress on earthly possessions and earthly distinctions, and gave them that importance which I could not reconcile with the feelings of a converted soul.

The influence of this discourse, which continued during the time of our dinner, and for the hour and a half during which we sat after dinner, operated in a contrary way on me and my wife. Lucy became silent, and was evidently thinking of something apart from what my aunt was saying; and I became warm and disputatious, and said a vast deal more against the sin of conformity to the world than was reasonable, or than I really felt.

It was an opinion of my dear Lucy's, that disputes

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create domestic misery; and, whenever an argument became warm between us, she always declined the contest, and, by so doing, generally prevailed.

She had observed my increasing warmth towards my aunt, and had given me several beseeching looks, to which I had paid little attention; till at length, hearing the cry of little George, she proposed to retire. My aunt, at the same time, hinted that she should like to see my garden, and asked me to conduct her there while Lucy was engaged with her baby.

While my aunt was getting her bonnet, Lucy took the occasion to beg me to desist from contention. "Your aunt is so much older than yourself," she said, "that it does not become you to contradict her. She only speaks the language of the world and of those who live in it. Why, then, should you express so much astonishment and irritation?"

"But she is not a worldly person," was my reply; "she professes to be a Christian. I should have been prepared for such language from an unconverted woman; but from my aunt Kate—"

"And why should you expect your aunt Kate to be free from inconsistencies," answered Lucy, "any more than other people's aunts? Only take care lest aunt Kate should find imperfections in her nephew," she added, with a smile, as she ran up to her babe.

I knew that Lucy was right, and I resolved to do as she wished. But there is nothing which makes a man feel more uncomfortable than having an ardent longing to be disputatious, and being, at the same time, resolved not to dispute. I therefore gave my aunt my arm, and stepped out with her into the garden, in no very agreeable state of mind. I, however, put such a restraint on myself, that she did not observe that any thing was amiss. We walked to the bottom of the garden, where little was to be seen, as every thing there was in its infancy, and from thence passed through the wicket into the churchyard, where my aunt spent some time in contemplating the rustic tombs.

While walking among these mouldering memorials of past generations, it was to be expected that all the finer feelings of her heart should be called forth. I have before said, that there was no question but that the work of grace was begun in the breast of my respectable relation, though it was not far advanced; and I was not

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prepared to expect the inconsistencies which are generally found in those persons whose early habits are at war with their later convictions.

What passed among the tombs, with the reflections made on the subject by my aunt, and the hopes she expressed that from henceforward few might rest in that place who might not have reason to thank God for having brought me to reside among them, fully restored my peace of mind; and we returned to tea in the best possible disposition with each other. But, after tea, I found myself again irritated by a remark respecting the window-curtains, which were of muslin, and which my aunt observed were prettily arranged, but had not a good effect, from wanting a warmer drapery over them.

This remark was made to Lucy, who calmly replied, that it was certainly the case.

"You will add the other curtains, then, in winter?" asked my aunt.

"We mean to do so, by-and-by," said Lucy.

"To tell you the truth, aunt," I replied, "we cannot yet afford to pay for richer curtains. We must wait till we can do so."

Aunt Kate hemmed several times, and answered, "You don't see much company, I suppose, nephew?"

"Very little, ma'am," answered Lucy, in order to prevent the necessity of my speaking.

"It would not do," replied my aunt, "unless you had suitable things about you. There are many little necessaries, I think, which you have not yet provided. But you seem very comfortable upon the whole."

"Comfortable!" said Lucy, speaking with vivacity; "more than comfortable; I never expected to be so happy on earth as I am. We are so abundant in blessings! Mary, and Rosa, and George, they are such treasures!"

"Treasures!" replied my aunt; "poor Lucy! you have a new mode of calculation. These are the treasures which compel you to do without the comforts you should have, and which your situation requires. But I love your warm feelings, my dear niece," she added, laying her hand on her arm; "only, don't go too far; don't allow yourself to despise the elegancies of life too much. Something is due to yourself and your husband, as well as to your children. Religious persons should, above all things, avoid inconsistencies."

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"Inconsistencies!" I repeated, in no mild tone.

On which Lucy said, "My dear husband, your aunt has a right to give me her advice, and I thank her for it; and I will hear her. And so, if you please, you shall take the little girls, and visit our poor woman in the coppice; and my aunt and I will have a little private conversation while I put George to sleep."

"Very well," I said; "if it must be so: but, my good aunt, I shall not thank you if you make Lucy dissatisfied."

I was proceeding, when Lucy opened the parlour door, and playfully told me to walk out of the room.

I cannot say what passed between Lucy and my aunt, though I saw that the former looked less cheerful, less happy, on my return to supper, than I had seen her; but, on my questioning her on the subject, she said that nothing had passed in the tête-à-tête which had been unpleasant; and that, if she did not look so well as she sometimes did, it was because she had been up later than usual the night before.

The next morning I was relieved by the arrival of my wife's brother, a young man of eighteen, who was particularly congenial to me, from his likeness to his sister, whose lovely spirit he possessed in a very considerable degree.

I know not whether there was any collusion between the brother and sister; but this I know, that things were so managed between them, that I was seldom left with my aunt, and every argument was interrupted by some boy's trick on the part of one, or some little innocent female manœuvre on the part of the other; though, at the same time, there seemed to be a very good understanding between my aunt and Lucy.

At length, the week which my aunt had proposed to spend with us had nearly passed away; and, on the eve of her departure, she made so decided an effort to be alone with me that it was no longer to be evaded, and I had the honour of conducting her to my study after tea, and the pain of seeing the door closed upon us immediately afterward.

She opened the conference in the following terms. "My dear nephew," she said, "I am desirous, before I leave you, to say that, upon the whole, I have had great satisfaction in this visit. I admire, I love, I honour your wife; I like your house, your situation, your little church; I love your children: your daughters are pretty

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well managed, and apparently happy; your son is a sweet promising infant: I like your family devotions, your domestic plans, &c. &c. But—" and here she paused.

I have often thought that there is not a word in the English language more disagreeable than *but*. I hate a but, and all its connexions and synonymes; and I never thought this word sounded more disagreeable than it then did; and the long pause after the but was also very unpleasant.

"*But*, my dear nephew," continued my aunt, "as a religious man, you should endeavour to be consistent, and to avoid singularities." And she looked very earnestly in my face, expecting a reply, which not being at hand, she proceeded: "It appears, my dear nephew, that in some points you and your wife indulge yourselves in too great contempt of some of the common usages of society."

"Well, madam?" I said, not, I fear, very respectfully.

"Christians," continued she, "should above all things avoid inconsistencies."

"Certainly, ma'am," I replied.

"They should endeavour, in minor matters, to do as others do."

"Undoubtedly, madam."

"In furniture, dress, the decorations of the house and table, all decent observances should be attended to," continued my relation.

I was sullen, and resolved not to help the good lady forward.

"I must be plain with you, nephew," she added, after another pause.

"Do so, madam," I answered, with some stiffness; "I beg you will use no ceremony."

"Well, then," she resumed, her warmth increasing in proportion with my impenetrableness, "I will be as candid with you as I have been with your wife; and will tell you that there are some things in your family arrangements that would be thought extremely unsuitable by people who have been used to live in any sort of style. But I see that you are offended, nephew; I will therefore add no more."

"Why should you suppose that I am offended?"

"By your manner, nephew; your raised colour, your coldness," she replied.

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"Offended!" I repeated; "that is not precisely the state of the case. I am not offended; but I am hurt, confused, astonished. I had prepared myself to suppose that Christian elders were disposed to approve of simplicity of manners and prudential motives of action in young people. But I have observed that, ever since you arrived, you have been hinting at something wrong, although I have never thoroughly understood what you meant. Surely, as a follower of the meek and lowly Saviour, you cannot be recommending a worldly and ambitious spirit to your nephew and niece?"

She interrupted me by saying, solemnly, "Heaven forbid!"

"What, then, madam," I said, "do you mean? Excuse me if I am hasty; I know that my temper is naturally warm: I am often humbled under a sense of this infirmity. But I respect your character; I love you as a relation; and I have been accustomed to reverence your judgment. Hold me not longer in suspense; but tell me plainly, what is it that you would have altered in our arrangements?"

"Nephew," she replied, "I will be frank. I do not desire you to be ambitious, or to depart from the becoming plainness of a Christian. But I wish you and your wife to recollect your situation and rank in society, and to live in that manner which is considered equivalent to that rank."

"It is by a kind Providence, madam," I replied, "and not by rank, that we are enabled to afford ourselves the conveniences and comforts of life. We could not indulge in luxuries without involving ourselves in debt."

"You ought not to have married, then, so soon," she replied.

"But we *are* married," I answered; "and if we rather chose to live humbly than to postpone our union in order that we might live splendidly, we certainly think we have committed no great error."

"It is to be lamented," replied my aunt, "that such is your way of thinking. But, as you say, the thing is now done, and cannot be helped, and we must make the best of it; and therefore I would by no means recommend a departure from your present economical plans, excepting in a few particulars, which I am amazed you have not adopted."

I was silent, not knowing at all what particulars she

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alluded to; and my silence continued till my aunt seemed to feel the awkwardness of the pause, and spoke again. "Forty pounds," she said, "properly laid out, would set many things right. Your study-table, on which you dine, is much too small; it is impossible to arrange a dinner upon it; you have not even half a dozen silver forks, in case of genteel visiters; you want a sofa in your best parlour; the curtains I have hinted at before; and a tin candlestick to go to bed with is a thing I never saw before in any creditable house. There are several more deficiencies, which I have enumerated to Lucy."

"To Lucy!" I repeated. "And you have really been speaking to Lucy on these matters?" I added, with restrained vexation; "and what was her reply?"

"That which was very proper," she answered. "Your wife says that she means to provide all these things when she is able; though she added that she hoped I would not put off my next visit till these things were rectified; which made me rather fear that she did not consider these deficiencies in her establishment of the importance which they really are."

It was impossible for me, at this point of our conversation, to restrain a smile, though it was not a pleasant feeling that created that smile. I could not endure the folly of my aunt with common patience; and to think of the self-possession of Lucy under all this petty teasing, irritated me much; and, being carried away by my passion, I replied, "Well, my good aunt, much as I have been accustomed to love and honour you, I entirely disagree with Lucy, and I hope and trust that you will never think of visiting us again till we can light you to bed with silver candlesticks."

So saying, I arose, bowed to my relation, and walked out of the house, banging the hall door after me with a force which shook the whole building.

I crossed the garden hastily, sprang over a gate into a field, and, in a few minutes, was in the little coppice where I had walked a few days before with my wife and dear children. Through a vista in the wood I saw before me the white walls of the thatched cottage, where lay the old woman with whom I had been accustomed to pray; and the song of the blackbird still resounded among the trees. But, oh! how changed were my feelings! How miserable, how conscience-stricken

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was I at that moment! how degraded in my own eyes! If my aunt had teased me, had I not, in return, insulted this respected relation? if she had charged me with inconsistency in small matters, had I not proved, to the shame of my profession, that I could be inconsistent in great ones? In vain I tried to sooth my conscience with these reflections:—"Had not my aunt been a pious woman, I should have been unaffected by her worldly counsels. But when and where I expected approbation and encouragement,—approbation for simplicity, and encouragement for prudence, to find the contrary, it is hard to bear. Where I hoped for pure Christian principles, to find such a worldly spirit, is it not trying? And to find the peace of my beloved wife so cruelly troubled by such gross folly, could I have been expected to endure it with patience?" In vain, I repeat, I tried to calm my mind with these reflections: I had done wrong, and I could not but feel it. I was not in a state to pray with others. I turned, therefore, from the cottage, and hastened into one of the darkest shades of the wood; where, leaning my back against a tree, I stood musing deeply and sadly for a length of time.

The sun had set, and the air was filled with many little insects, which had risen from the swampy parts of the coppice. A low wind also had risen, and rustled among the leaves; the noise of which prevented my hearing the soft step of some one approaching, till the person was close at hand, and, turning round, I saw my Lucy. "What are you here for?" I said, hastily.

"I am come to bring you home, my love," she replied, in notes more sweet than the songsters of that coppice; "come back to your worthy aunt, and tell her you are sorry for what you have said; come back, my love." And she laid her hand on my arm.

"Has the old lady complained to you?" I asked.

"Come back," she repeated; "come and say you are sorry."

"But if I have been violent, she deserved it," I answered. "Why did she come here to destroy our peace?"

"She has not destroyed our peace," she answered; "she could not have injured it had we done well."

"But you have done nothing wrong, Lucy," I replied, "and she has made you unhappy."

"I am unhappy, now," returned Lucy; "but not from

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what my aunt has said to me respecting things which, from experience, I know to be unnecessary to my comfort; but from the effect which her discourse has had on you. Had you, my love, refrained from answering her as you did, I should have parted from her to-morrow without an uneasy thought, and returned with renewed delight to our own easy and happy mode of life. But, oh, my husband! how shall I now take leave of her, unless you will confess your fault, and apologize to her?"

"I will not, Lucy," I replied; "I cannot forgive a Christian friend for giving worldly counsel to those younger than herself. Go home, and tell her so."

"Home? home?" said Lucy, weeping; "where is my home but with you? I will call this wood my home, if you persist in staying here."

I could not bear to witness her tears; my stubborn feelings gave way in an instant. "Lead on, my angelic guide," I said, "I will follow you anywhere. I have done ill; I will confess it before my aunt—before the whole world. I have been rash; I have been unkind; nay, I will own more than this, I have been worldly-minded. I confess that my aunt, for a moment, made me ashamed of our simple habits; she made me a partaker in her worldly feelings. Hence my violence; hence my disrespectful language; it was an effort of pride to conceal its mortification. But I am humbled; thank God, I am humbled! Lead on, my Lucy; you have prevailed."

"Say not that I have prevailed; it is the Spirit of God, the holy and blessed inspirer of all that is good, which has prevailed," said she, as she held my arm, and led me directly towards our house.

There I trust that I did all that was required of me, in making the humblest acknowledgment to my aunt; and, in so doing, was permitted to evince the power of true religion in bringing back the offender to the ways of rectitude.

My good aunt Kate received my apologies with Christian kindness. We parted the best of friends; and she consented to pay us an annual visit, although assured by my Lucy that it was very probable she might never be able to receive her in better style than that in which she had first been admitted under our roof.

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It was during the fourth annual visit of my dear aunt that I was engaged by her to write this little narrative, as a caution to all religious parents and elders, how they give worldly counsel to their young friends and relations, and press upon them a dangerous conformity to the ways of the world. For the love of the world, and any approach to its vanities, are destructive evils most carefully to be avoided.

END OF MY AUNT KATE.

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EMMELINE.

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EMMELINE.

THIS little story is not intended for grown persons, or such as we may suppose to have lived so long in the world as to have forgotten that they ever were children, or ever delighted in such things as children love.

I am not now, indeed, a child myself, for forty summers and forty winters have already passed since I entered my teens—and my youngest child is older now than I was when the things took place which I am about to relate; but I am not purposing to write the whole history of my childhood, or to say more of myself than is necessary to make my little readers thoroughly understand an adventure which happened when I was in my twelfth year.

It was so sweet and so pleasant an adventure to me at the time, and left such profitable and delightful recollections behind it, that I cannot but hope that the account of it will be exceedingly agreeable to all such little people as may happen to become acquainted with it through my recital.

I am the eldest daughter of a clergyman, and had one sister a year younger—I wish, for my own credit, that I could say she was a year older than myself. My name is Margaret, and if my sister was called Sophia, she well deserved the name, for from a babe it had pleased God to incline her heart to that heavenly wisdom whose price is far above rubies.

I had no companion through all the days of my childhood but my Sophia. Any one who looked at my sister in those happy days would have thought that she was like one of those redeemed ones who shall enjoy the pleasures of the last millennium, when the Shepherd King shall reign in person upon earth, and when all tears shall be wiped from every eye.

One day generally passed with us as another; in the morning we learned lessons with our dear mother—then

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came the hours of play, and in the evening our papa read to us and instructed us, and we were allowed one hour each afternoon to work for our dolls.

We had our common dolls for every day, and our superior dolls for holydays; these last were locked up in our mamma's Indian cabinet. I shall never forget that cabinet; it stood in our mother's dressing-room—it was inlaid with woods of different colours—there was a flower-pot, with a bird sitting among tulips, and roses on each door. The drawers were full of curious things; it was a great treat to us to be shown what was in those drawers. In that dressing-room there was a canary-bird in a cage, and many pictures of old buildings at Rome, with other wonderful things, as we thought them, and from the windows of this room we could see the sun setting behind the groves which arose in the west of the house.

I remember wondering how the sun, which went to bed on one side of the house, should get up exactly on the other—but I was a very little child when I had that thought.

I was speaking of our best dolls—we used to call them our blue-eyed babies, for they had beautiful blue glass eyes, and they had also auburn hair curling on each side of their cherry cheeks, and they were quite large, like babies; we were allowed to have them on every birth-day, and when they were to be replaced in the cabinet, we had to fold up their clothes, and to arrange every thing in the neatest order, against another happy day, in two little trunks, which were also kept in the cabinet.

We very seldom had any visiters to stay with us in the house, or to put us out of our quiet, happy way; but it happened, when I was in my twelfth year, that a letter came from a lady—a relation of my father—saying, that if agreeable, she would come and spend a few weeks at the parsonage. This lady was a widow, and had spent many years in France, and when my father spoke of her he called her madame, and so every one else took up the title, and everybody called her madame.

Children, however happy they may be, love a change, and I was vastly pleased to hear that madame was coming, and I was delighted to see the best bed room put in order for her on the morning she was expected:

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and after I had done my lessons, I watched for the carriage which was to bring her, from my play-room window, for an hour or more before I could see any sign of it. At length something black, and moving at a great rate, appeared coming down the opposite hills, and then I could see it no more for a little time, because it must needs descend into a valley, and not be seen for some time; but at length it appeared again, at the bottom of the hill on which our house stood, and it was a post-chaise, and I knew it was madame's. I waited a little while, and then I ran down out upon the lawn, and stood where I could see madame get out of the carriage; I had never before seen a person I had thought so grand. She was a very portly lady, about forty years of age, with cheeks as red as mine (and I was remarked at that time as the very image of rude health), and then her hair was frizzed and powdered, and she had large curls, fastened with black pins, hanging on each side of her cheeks, and she wore what we then called a balloon hat made of tiffany, with feathers, and spangles, and roses —how I did admire her as she stepped out from among the bandboxes with which the post-chaise was filled and covered; and how filled with awe was I, when my father, who spied me skulking behind the shrubs, called me to pay my compliments to her; how ashamed I was then of my brown holland pinafore, which had been put on to preserve my clean frock, and my garden bonnet, on which there was only a green band, and that even was much faded.

But madame said I looked very pretty, and had bright eyes, and lips of coral and vermilion, and this comforted me a little, for I had never heard such fine words as these spoken to me before that time.

So I followed the lady into the house, and was sent back again to fetch her canary-bird and her little French lapdog.

Now I do not remember much of what this lady did or said when she was in the parlour with my papa and mamma; but I remember very well many things which passed when I and my sister visited her, which we often did, in her sleeping-room; she never got up till after breakfast, and we were often employed to carry up her tea and chocolate, and we used to go to her again after we had done our lessons, at 12 o'clock, and then we generally found her sitting at her dressing-

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table doing her hair, which was a long piece of work, and we were of use then to do the back of it for her, as we had been accustomed to do for our mamma's, for dressing hair was a great business in those days.

On these occasions she used to show us all her fine French dresses, silks of all colours, with painted and embroidered trimmings, and feathers, and flowers, and gauzes, and spangles, and foil, and tinsels—Oh! how very grand I thought them! and there was a large bandbox of old chiffons, as she called them—I remember the word very well—and when she heard that we had dolls, she turned out this box, and filled our aprons with bits of what she called rubbish; bidding us, at the same time, divide them in our own room, for we screamed and jumped, and were so glad when these things were given us, that we disturbed her nerves, she said, and brought on an insufferable agitation of her heart.

We only waited to beg pardon for this offence, and then running to our mother's dressing-room, emptied all the rubbish at her feet.

"May we have these things, mamma? may we have them?" we said, for we were not often allowed to receive presents; and when we had got leave, we proceeded to divide them, by casting lots for the first choice, and then choosing turn by turn.

Oh! how delighted were we then! And our dear mamma looked down upon us as if she felt that we could not have a joy in which she had not a share.

Among all this mass of rubbish we presently found out that there were two grand prizes, namely, two large pieces of silk—one was blue, with violet and pink stripes, all the colours being very bright, though the silk was somewhat slashed and much rumpled—and the other was a dark green, with very little rose-buds wrought into the texture; there was more of the blue than of the green, the blue was therefore considered the first prize, and we both wished for it, but I thought myself fortunate in getting the first chance, and I immediately seized the prize. Sophia took the second, and then all went on smoothly. My next choice was a piece of yellow gauze, set with spangles—then Sophia chose a long piece of green riband; then I got a gauze handkerchief, wrought around with violet leaves—and so we went on, till we had each such a glorious heap of

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treasures as we never had dreamed of possessing. Our dear mamma then gave each of us a small drawer in her cabinet, and advised us first to get our little irons (for we had a small iron a piece), and smooth out all our treasures, and then lay them aside in the drawers till we had occasion to use them to some purpose. "But stop," she said, "I will ring for Dinah, and she shall iron them for you; and I hope that you will not forget to thank madame for her kindness." This was all done as our dear mamma directed; but that very evening I took out my silk after tea, while our mamma was sitting in the parlour with madame, and told my sister that I was going to make a French dress of it for my best doll.

"My doll shall not be dressed like a baby any longer, Sophia," I said; "I will make her a levet of this silk—madame calls the gown she had on to-day a levet—and I will trim it with the French fringe which is among my bits; and I will make my doll a balloon hat, and a flounced petticoat." So I took mamma's large scissors, and I sat down on my stool by the window, having the drawer on the carpet by me; and I began to cut my silk in breadths, all by guess, for I did not even know the length of my doll.

"Oh! don't cut the silk, Margaret!" exclaimed Sophia, who was sitting on the carpet looking over her own treasures; "don't cut it till you have spoken to mamma—think how valuable it is—please not to cut it."

"And why not?" I answered; "it is my own silk, and have not I a right to do what I please with my own silk?" and I set to work immediately—for I was very handy considering my age, and got a needle and thread, and began to make up the French dress which I had planned and cut out.

When Sophia saw what I had done, she very good-naturedly put away her drawer, and set herself to help me—and we sat till it was dark, and got up early the next morning, and finished the dress; and when I showed it to madame, she praised my taste and ingenuity; those were the words she used, adding, as she looked at Sophia, "Well, I hope that you will make as good a use of what I have given you as your sister has done."

The next day was Sunday—I remember that day as well as if it had happened only a year ago.

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The morning was bright, and the bells were ringing; when we opened our window, the smell of new-mown grass (for it was hay-making time) came into our room, and we went out into the garden to learn a hymn, for we had been always accustomed to say a hymn to our papa and mamma every Sunday morning before breakfast.

It was very hard work for madame to get ready for service, but she was ready in time, though not till our papa was gone on to the church; and when she appeared, how very fine she was!—I could not help thinking that my mamma and my sister looked like her servants, walking by her side—for I did not then understand that fine clothes are not necessary to make real ladies, though fine manners cannot be done without; and my mamma and sister had such manners as might have fitted them for the apartments of queens; for, like the king's daughter spoken of in the Psalms, they were all glorious within, and hence could not be otherwise than very lovely without.

Now the church was not far from my father's house; and because the people had not yet all come, and many were seen approaching in different directions over the fields, my father stood a while at the entrance of the church, in his gown and cassock, to talk to those who were already come, for he had an exceedingly pleasant way of talking to his people, and his gentle and kind manner made his religion as acceptable to them as his beautiful sermons could possibly do, although his sermons were most pleasant, inasmuch as they generally ran upon the love of God for his poor lost creatures, and on the happiness of those who are found of that dear Saviour, who laid down his life for his chosen ones.

So, as it happened, there was abundance of time for madame, in her silk shoes and long train, and balloon hat, to get to the church without disordering her dress, and I was proud and pleased to see how all the people turned to look at her, for many of them had never seen so fine a person in all their lives. So we came near the church, and while madame was moving slowly on, I had much time to look round me; I knew everybody, as I thought, at least by sight, through all the parish; I was therefore much surprised, just as I entered the churchyard, to see two people enter by another gate, neither of whom I had ever before beheld. I could at first only

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see the tops of their heads, as the churchyard sloped much on that side, but as they presently came in a line with me, and advanced towards the place where I stood, I had quite time to examine them from head to foot before we went into the church. One of these was an exceedingly old woman, and from her manner, even I should have taken her for something more than a cottager, had not her clothes looked very old and shabby. She wore a close black silk bonnet, a bombasin gown —which had once been black, but was now quite rusty— a clean lawn apron, a white shawl of fringed muslin, and a pair of knit silk mittens, which had been darned with black worsted; she was leaning on the arm of a tall slender girl of about twelve years of age.

Children are perhaps no great observers of that sort of external loveliness which consists in delicacy and modesty, yet my eye had no sooner fallen upon this young girl, than I could neither take it off till she had passed out of my sight, nor cease to think of her during the service: such pretty hair curling from under her bonnet, such a soft complexion, such dove-like eyes, such an innocent, modest expression—surely I had never seen, excepting in my own sweet sister; and who could she be? and then her dress—it was not like that of a cottager: she had a scanty and patched frock of old Indian chintz, which had belonged, perhaps, to the old woman in better days, a thin white tippet, and a very shabby chip bonnet, with a pair of cotton mittens; but she carried a handsome old prayer-book, with silver clasps, and wore a sprig of old man in her bosom, tied together with two pinks. As the old woman and this little girl passed through the porch, my father bowed respectfully to them. and they both dropped courtesies so profound, that it seemed as if they felt the compliment to be more than their due.

When the service was over, our family walked out of the church before the rest of the congregation stirred, a compliment always paid in those more simple days to the heads of the parish. My father did not follow us immediately; and my sister and I, as our custom was, having run home, hastened to a bower we had in the shrubbery to read our Sunday books,—for we had our Sunday books and our week-day books—we might read our Sunday books on a week-day, but we might not read our week-day books on a Sunday: when we had

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reached our bower, Sophia said, "Margaret, did you see that little girl at church?—that very nice little girl?"

"Why do you call her little?" I asked; "she is taller than you are."

"But is not she pretty?" returned my sister. "How gentle she looks, and how shabby her clothes are!—and I cannot think who she is—I never saw her before—what a poor bonnet and tippet she had! and yet how neat she was!—I wish I knew more about her."

We talked over the old woman and the little girl, and made many guesses, and could make nothing out; no, not so much as to form an idea of the house in which they might possibly live—for we knew every cottage in the parish, and did not know of any which had been empty, excepting one which was supposed not to be habitable, standing in the depths of a wood, and at about a mile from the church; but we could not believe that such persons as those we were talking about could possibly have taken up their abode in that desolate and solitary place. We were interrupted in our discourse by the dinner-bell,—for we always dined early on a Sunday,—and when we came to table, we found our papa and mamma and madame talking about the very same persons who had afforded the subject of our discourse in the bower.

"I was as much pleased with them as you could be, my dear," said our father, speaking to mamma; "that respectable-looking old woman, and that lovely little girl, her granddaughter. I am sure there is something uncommon in their histories; but I could learn nothing more of them than that they have been in the parish about six months, living in that poor miserable cottage in the wood, above the waterfall which tumbles into the dingle beyond the shrubbery. They took the house, farmer Taylor says, for cheapness, requiring him only to make it weather-proof and tight, and to whitewash the inside; and really, he says, they have made it look better within than could be thought possible with their poor means; but the old lady has never till to-day been able to walk to church."

"Lady!" said madame; "what, my good friend, are you going to make a lady of this poor cottager?"

"I spoke without thought," replied my father, "and from the impulse of feeling. When I see a fine man-

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ner, I am apt to think that the person who has it is a lady or a gentleman, although but an inhabitant of a cottage."

I remember no more of this conversation, and before night I had forgotten the old woman and her little granddaughter, and the cottage in the wood, and all about them; for madame had asked for a whole holyday for us the next day, and the favour had been granted, and we were to spend it as we pleased, and without interruption; for our papa and mamma were going with madame, who was to leave us that day for the nearest town, in which she had taken lodgings: so we expected that our parents would be out all day, and although it always vexed us much when they went out, yet we were not sorry to have a whole day to work at our bundles of odds and ends. Dinah, the servant mentioned before, had been our nurse, and we loved her very much; and when our parents were gone, she came and sat with us—having had leave so to do—and we consulted her respecting our treasures.

"This bit of green silk, Miss Sophia," she said, "is uncommonly neat and pretty—it would make a bonnet."

"Will you have it, Dinah?" said my sister; "you are very welcome to it."

"Thank you, my little dear," replied Dinah, "thank you all the same; but I never wore a coloured bonnet in my life, and at my time of day I am sure I shall not begin with any such vanities. I was not thinking of myself, but I was thinking that there is many a tidy little child would be thankful for such a bonnet as I could make of this, with a bit of pasteboard, and a little cat-gut and wire."

"I have thought of something—I have thought of something," cried my sister; "and if you will make it, Dinah, I will give it that pretty little girl we saw at church—Oh! do, dear Dinah, do set to work."

"I will, miss—I will, miss," replied the good-natured servant; "I have the old foundation of a bonnet in my room, wire, and pasteboard, and cat-gut, and all—and, let me see the silk—I think, if you could find me a little bit of something else for lining the front, I could make out a tippet too."

"Yes, yes," said Sophia, "and how lucky! here is a little bit of pink persian, and some green riband—make haste, Dinah, make haste: how can I help you? I will

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put all the other things away, and set to work at once; cannot I make the tippet?"

When persons undertake to write true stories, they must tell all the truth, and not part of the truth, otherwise the story is not a true one, but a false one; accordingly, however ashamed I may be, I must not hide from my reader a very unpleasant part of my story, which is this,—that when I was a child, I was by no means what might be called a good child. I had some very naughty ways and bad propensities.

Although I had been brought up in the knowledge of religion from a baby, I had lived till the time I am speaking of without taking any pleasure whatever in it. I could say several catechisms, and answer almost any common question belonging to Bible history, as well as any of you, my readers; and I was forced, as it were, to behave ordinarily well, by my good parents and my worthy nurse; neither would my sister have hidden any thing she thought very wrong in me from my mamma, for she was a holy child; yet, with all this, my heart was often as hard as a stone, as it regarded religion; in spite of all that was in my head, there was little in my heart that was right; and you know that the heart of man is naturally hard and selfish—thinking no good thought, and delighting in no good thing; and that this natural depravity always remains the same, till it is counteracted by the Divine influences of the Holy Spirit, descending upon it like rain on the dry and parched ground. The change which the Holy Spirit produces in the heart is called regeneration, or the new birth. When Christ our Lord, who is God the Son, died to satisfy the justice of God the Father, he procured for us all those benefits which we receive from God the Holy Spirit; and these are many, although those who have never experienced them even go so far as to deny that they exist.

God the Spirit first calls us through the means of pious friends, and good books, and sermons, and afflictions. I, for one, had been called and called again to come to my God, and be saved; but I had not listened to the call at the time I am writing about. And next he regenerates us, and gives us hearts to love our God and our fellow-creatures; and then he sanctifies us, teaching us to do works such as are pleasing to the Lord, and to resist our wicked natures and bad passions;

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and then, when we are on our death-bed, he sets us free from sin for ever, and brings us into the glory prepared for us by the Father, and purchased for us by the Son.

Thus the three persons in one God all work together to bring us unto glory, and all we do by nature is to fight and struggle against every effort which is made to make us happy.

So we have no merit of our own—we have done nothing—and can do nothing—we are all utterly vile; neither was there any difference by nature between me and my sister, though at the time I speak of she was very lovely and I was very wicked; yet there was no glory due to her, for, had the Almighty left her in her original nature, she would have been just as unamiable in one way or other as I was.

But the Holy Spirit had prepared her heart to receive the love of Christ. I can venture to say that she had been regenerated even then, and the work of sanctification was going on, and power had been given her to overcome her evil nature; while as yet, as I before said, my heart was still in a very hard and unchanged state, and I was subject to violent fits of ill-humour.

Therefore when I saw Sophia so pleased and busy in helping Dinah with the bonnet and tippet, and when I saw the bonnet grow into form and shape under Dinah's hands, I became very sulky, and said to myself—There now, when mamma sees that bonnet, she will say—or she will think it if she does not say it—that Sophia has made a better use of her silk than Margaret has of hers, and she will think it every time she sees the little girl in the bonnet at church—I know she will—and Sophia herself will think so—and Dinah will say so—she will say it in the kitchen before the cook and the footman—I wish madame had not given us all this rubbish; and I took up all my bits from the table in my two hands, and threw them into my drawer in a heap, and shut up the drawer in the cabinet, and walked out of the room, though Sophia and Dinah called after me.

I was in a better humour when I met my sister at dinner, but I was vexed again when, just before tea, Dinah brought the bonnet into the parlour, where I was reading, all finished and trimmed, with the tippet hanging over her arm, while Sophia followed all glee and joy.

"Is not it beautiful, Margaret?" said my sister; "so neat and elegant—with that little bit of pink persian

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which we found for the lining, but we were forced to patch it in four places; and, if you please, we will take them this evening. You will come with us, dear Margaret; it will be a pleasant walk, and mamma said we might have a walk with Dinah: but you are vexed, Margaret," she added, "you have tears in your eyes."

"Because I know you will say that you have made a better use of your silk than I have," I answered.

"No, indeed, I will not," replied Sophia.

"But you will think it though," I added.

"And so she well may, Miss Margaret," remarked Dinah; "she has indeed made a better use of her silk than you have done of yours."

"But if she had thought that her silk would have been of any use to a poor person, I am sure she would have given it to that poor person—I am quite sure," returned my fair sister. "Would not you, dear Margaret—you did not think of it, did you? But I have thought of something; you shall give me all that is left of your striped silk, and I will give you this tippet to carry to the little girl, and then it will be partly your present and partly mine; will that do?" And then she kissed me, and said, "Don't cry, dear Margaret; take the tippet, and we will have our tea and make haste."

When this was settled, I got into better humour; so we had our tea, and set out; we knew the way pretty well, and it was a lovely evening, warm, but not too hot, and our path lay for the most part through woods. Dinah carried the bonnet and tippet in a large market basket, and Sophia and I each carried another small basket. In one of these we put some gooseberries, and in another a cauliflower and a little twopenny book of which we happened to have two of a kind in our library.

Dinah walked gravely on, but we ran and jumped; and so we went through the shrubbery, and along a coppice, and down into a dingle, and over a wooden bridge, and up the other side of the dingle, and at length we came out upon a very steep down—so very steep that Dinah was obliged to mount it by a zigzag path made by the sheep; for there were sheep and lambs feeding on that down, and it was pleasant to hear the woolly mothers calling to their innocent young ones, while the echoes of the valleys repeated their cries.

What a pretty harmless creature is a lamb, how entirely helpless and inoffensive! What animal can be a

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fitter emblem of our Lord in human flesh when left defenceless in the power of the ravening wolf? But I should not say that our Lord was left defenceless; no, he was not left defenceless, but he rendered himself so for our benefit; even when persecuted unto death, as he himself said, he had only to speak the word, and ten thousand legions of angels would have instantly appeared in his behalf.

But where am I wandering—whither have I been led by the remembrance of the milk-white lambs which were frisking on those thymy uplands?

We were hardly at the top of the hill when we found ourselves under a high thorny hedge through which it was impossible to scramble; we were therefore obliged to walk a long way under the hedge, till at length we found a stile over which we climbed, and entered a dark briery coppice, where we heard jays and magpies, and the harsh cry of the corncrake.

"What a place is this," said Dinah, "for an old woman and a young girl! surely one must want a home indeed to seek one here."

"I like it vastly," replied Sophia; "how cool it is in these woods, and what a smell of flowers!"

"It might do in June," returned Dinah; "but what would you say to it in January, when the trees are without leaf, the ground strewed with rotting leaves, and the boughs bending before the cold north wind? Folks may talk of the country, but give me a single room in a town, if I am to live alone in my old age, or even with a child for my companion."

When we had got on into the deepest part of the coppice, the house we were seeking became visible to us. First we saw a huge ill-shapen chimney, and then a window in the thatch, but the door opened the other way. The place looked gloomy and dark, even in that fine season; but when we had passed round one side of the house and come to the front, we found that the wood in that place was somewhat more open, and there was a door, the upper half of which was unclosed, and a casement window, having exceedingly small panes of greenish glass. Before the door was a little plot of ground, roughly fenced out from the wood, in which were a few flowers, a small path laid with pebbles, and a rough bench. We walked up to the door, and looking in before the inhabitants of the house were aware of us,

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saw things which even as children surprised us much. The kitchen was exceedingly small, though the chimney was wide: the walls were only roughly whitewashed, yet there were several curious pieces of furniture in the house—curious I mean when the place was considered—for there was a japan timepiece on a shelf in one corner of the room, and an old mahogany round table, and the portrait of a clergyman, in a wig and gown and cassock, hanging on the wall. As to the rest, the house was extremely bare of furniture, though what there was, was delicately neat.

The old person whom we had seen at church sat near the window; and although I had thought her but meanly dressed on the Sunday, she was still more humbly attired, in a woollen petticoat and jacket, with a coloured apron and handkerchief, when we saw her again in her own house; but she was diligently knitting some coarse blue woollen, such as peasants wear, which woollen she had probably spun, as a large wheel for the purpose stood in an inner room, or sort of store-room, the door of which was ajar; but this poor humble person, as she sat knitting, was listening to her granddaughter, who was reading aloud from a large folio volume, which we afterward found to be an ancient history, while another large book lay open before her; this last was the Bible, and she was, it seems, comparing and proving one of these with the other.

We stood for a minute or two looking on without being seen, for the back of the little girl was towards us, and the old woman's eyes were too dim to permit her to distinguish any thing at a distance; and while there we heard the old woman set her pupil right in one or two places, not speaking as a village schoolmistress would have done, but as one who had herself been taught in a superior way.

Dinah looked at us, and then she spoke: and addressing the old woman by her name, "Mrs. Norton," she said, for we had all learned her name, "here are some ladies come to see you." The old woman arose hastily, and the little girl turned round; she knew us immediately, and telling her grandmother who we were, they made us come in and sit down, and the old lady, for I must call her a lady, although she wore only a blue woollen dress, regretted that she had nothing to offer us but some tea. Would we please to have a little

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tea! of course we refused, for why should we who wanted nothing consume any of her little store! and then Dinah, by our desire, opened her basket, and while I presented the tippet, Sophia gave the bonnet.

"What are these, ladies!" said Mrs. Norton.

"They are for your granddaughter, ma'am," said Sophia.

"For my Emmeline!" replied the old woman, while the tears started in her eyes. "Ah! no, no, it cannot be! my poor Emmeline. No, dear ladies, take them back, my little girl must not wear such things: she must bend to her lot; very poor she is, and she must submit to the Divine will: she will think herself too fine in this silk bonnet, and get proud, I fear, and then what is to become of us? Lady," she added, speaking to Sophia, "you must not give such things as these to poor cottagers."

"But I think," replied Sophia, looking at the books on the table, "you are not exactly like other cottagers."

"I am," she answered, "I am no better than the poorest person in this parish; I am not in want, thanks be due to the Giver of all good, but I am reduced to the lowest place in society, and so is my Emmeline. When I am dead and gone, she may perhaps do better, for I am endeavouring to give her an education; but we must either be content to be very poor now, or to be worse hereafter, and we choose rather to be poor now. But, dear ladies, this bonnet is too smart for my little girl."

"No," said Sophia, "no, please to take it—let her have it. Would not you like to have it, little girl!" she added, in her gentlest voice: "I know you would, and we made it for you. Please to let her have it, ma'am, —see, the tears are in her eyes, let her have it, ma'am" —and Sophia pleaded till she fairly burst into tears, and she was joined by the little girl for whom she was pleading.

"Bless you, little lady," said the venerable woman, "who can refuse your request! take the gift, my Emmeline: in truth, my child, you did need a decent bonnet, but this is too good for you: kind ladies, may Heaven bless you."

We then presented our other little presents, and, being reminded by Dinah, set off to return home, all of us being quite surprised at what we had seen and heard; for we felt sure that these poor cottagers whom we had

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just left had seen better days, and once lived in very different societies. When arrived at home, we found our parents returned; we told them how we had spent our day; and my father said, "I must inquire into the history of these poor people; there is something in it which I cannot understand; their wants must be relieved—they must be made comfortable;" and he made us understand how pleased he was with us by the manner in which we had spent our day—for Sophia had given me credit for having taken my full share in all that had been done for the poor little girl in the cottage.

However, during that week there was other business to be accomplished, and our papa and mamma had no time to attend to Mrs. Norton and her affairs, though Sophia reminded them of her once or twice: and during that week also, I remember having one or two thoughts of a more gracious nature than ever I had had before; I felt more ashamed of my ill behaviour about the bonnet and tippet than I generally did for any offence which had not been followed by reproof or chastisement, and I began to ask myself, What makes Sophia so much better than I am? Is it because she reads her Bible oftener, and kneels down and prays to God to forgive her, and the Holy Spirit to help her, through Christ our Lord, whenever she does wrong or is inclined to do wrong? I do believe it is so; and I do think that the reason why I am so naughty is, because I do not like religion. I think I am very wicked—I wish I was better—I do wish I was better. These, you will say, were good and precious thoughts, and not such as proceed naturally from the heart of a child, for the wise man says, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child" (Prov. xxii. 15); and you will not wonder if I love to think of the history of the little green bonnet and tippet, if it was the first means used by my Heavenly Father to bring me to serious thought; neither were these serious thoughts without their influence upon my actions; for on the Saturday evening I went to my mother, who was reading in her dressing-room, and told all my ill behaviour on the day she was from home, and I took my piece of yellow gauze adorned with spangles, and put it into my sister's drawer of treasures, and I never would be persuaded to take it back again. Sophia made a work-bag of it some time afterward, lining it with white silk, and putting a fringe

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round it, and she sent it as a present to a cousin of ours who had given her a book of birds and beasts.

Mamma kissed me, and was very much pleased with my confession; and she knelt down and prayed with me that I might be a follower of the Lamb whithersoever he went.

But we were very anxious to see Emmeline in her bonnet and tippet, and we waited for her at the church door the next Sunday, and indeed she did look very pretty, and she made us such a courtesy as she passed us, that everybody in the church porch looked after her, and our papa said, when we got home, "That little cottager has not been brought up in an ordinary way, I am quite sure; we must see after this family to-morrow."

But when the next day came, we were again obliged to put off our walk to the cottage in the wood; for, just as we were sitting down to dinner, a gentleman, attended by a servant on horseback, rode up to the gate.

This gentleman was a very dear friend of my father —we will call him Woodville; his place of abode was in a cathedral town in another county—he was a clergyman, and had a high situation in the cathedral—and he was a pious man, and very kind to those in distress; he had come to spend a few days with his old friend, and my parents were quite delighted to see him; his journey had tired him, and therefore he did not walk out that evening; but at dinner the next day, papa told him of the old woman and pretty little girl who lived in the wood, and he replied, "Let us all go in the cool of the evening, and see these poor people;" moreover, he took his purse out of his pocket, and took out four half-crowns, and gave two of them to me and two to Sophia, saying, "You will spend these, my dear little girls, for any of your young friends who may be in need. I know that your papa has taught you to look on all your poor humble fellow-creatures as friends."

We never had had so much money in our lives, and we looked at our parents for leave to take it—and they did not say no; but directed us to thank the kind gentleman.

We were glad when the time came that we might leave the table and run to add our money to our treasure drawer, for we were resolved to consult our mamma

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about the way in which it was to be spent, which we accordingly did some time afterward.

At five o'clock our mamma called us to prepare for our walk, for we were to drink tea when we came back; and she also bade us go to Dinah to have our small baskets filled with fruit and vegetables, and any other little things which might be spared from the pantry, for we seldom went to see the poor people without carrying something for them.

There were no pretty tracts and little books in those days to give to the poor; at any rate, they were very scarce and very dear; but we often took Bibles to houses where there were none.

We were all ready before six o'clock, and we walked, as mamma had directed us, quietly behind the grown-up people; for our parents used to say—little girls should be seen and not heard, an old proverb, which I fear is not much attended to in these days. So we went quietly on through the beautiful woods, and nobody took any notice of us any farther than to look back now and then and smile at us; Dr. Woodville did so more than once or twice; and children who are humbly and properly brought up are more gladdened by the smiles of their elders than a spoiled child would be with a handful of sugar-plums.

Grown-up people, who are not very young, always find it more difficult to climb up steep places than children do. Dr. Woodville and our parents were a long time getting up the slope on the other side of the dingle, and my sister and I asked leave to run before, and tell the old woman that we were coming; and having leave we did so; we found her employed much as we had done when we had first visited her, for I suppose she kept particular times for particular work; and she put by her table with the books on it, and set all the chairs she had in order, and put on a white apron, and made the little girl get a lawn pinafore, and tie it on; and this was hardly done before papa and mamma and Dr. Woodville arrived. The gentlemen were obliged to stoop as they came in at the door, and the moment Dr. Woodville raised his head again, he fixed his eyes on the picture of the clergyman, and said, "Who is this? Whose picture is this? I could fancy I had seen it before."

"It was my poor husband's, sir," replied the old lady.

"Your husband!" returned Dr. Woodville. "Who

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are you? Let me know your history. Are you the widow of a clergyman?"

"Yes, sir," she replied; and thus from one question to another she told her whole story, and I shall repeat it as shortly as I can.

Mrs. Norton's husband had been the rector of a poor little parish in Wales, and she had also been the daughter of a clergyman, and had been well educated, though she had brought no fortune; she described her husband as having been the best and kindest of men, and spoke of three children she had had, one only of whom had survived his infancy, and this was the father of Emmeline, who, as well as her mother, was also dead.

"And thus," she said, "I was left a widow with an orphan granddaughter, but the Almighty provided for me; I never knew want:" and she went on to say that she received twenty pounds a year, which was given her from some charity which there is for the widows of clergymen.

"But if you have twenty pounds a year, why are you so very poor as you appear to be, my good madam?" replied Dr. Woodville. "Why should you choose so miserable a place as this, and why not rather live in a town, where, at least, you would have your fellow-creatures about you?"

"Sir," replied Mrs. Norton, "I have done what perhaps you may not think very wise. When Emmeline was left to me, I ensured my life for two hundred pounds, for which I have eight pounds a year to pay. I considered that if I died she would be left without a penny; and I am obliged to observe the closest economy in order to be able to live on the twelve pounds which remain; hence, chancing to know the worthy farmer in whose house I live, I was tempted to come to this place; and though it is dreary in winter, we have been very happy here—have we not, Emmeline?"

"Yes, dear grandmamma," answered the little girl, "we have been very happy, and you have had time to teach me; but I wish that you had not done that about the money; I am young, and can work and maintain myself."

"But she was only six years old, and a tender little thing, when she first came to me, sir," said the old woman, addressing Dr. Woodville; "and so I was tempted

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to do what I did, and we do very well indeed, sir—very well—we never want."

"But your child can have little education in this place!" said my mother.

"Madam," replied the old lady, "my dear husband took much pains with me, and for one in my station, I am not ignorant; and we have many books in the room above; they are our greatest earthly comfort, nay, I may say our greatest heavenly comfort, inasmuch as we have a large Bible among them; and I understand needle-work too, ma'am, needle-work of most sorts,—though I cannot now see to do any thing but spin."

While the old lady was talking to mamma, and showing her some specimens of Emmeline's work, among which was a curious sampler, I saw Dr. Woodville standing with his eyes fixed on the picture, from which suddenly turning, he said, "Did your husband's house face the Brithen Hills? Was it in a deep valley? Was there a very small village just beyond the paling of the garden? Did the church look like a barn, with a wooden spire?"

"All was so as you say, sir," replied Mrs. Norton; "there I spent forty happy years, and in that churchyard rest the remains of my poor husband and my dear children; but he was a holy man, the father and friend of his people, and so liberal to the needy, sir, that he never had aught to lay aside for his family; but we have never wanted."

"I have it, then, I have it," returned Dr. Woodville. "Do you remember (it may now be thirty or thirty-five years since) two young gentlemen arriving on foot in your village, and being received in your house for want of accommodation at the public house?"

"Ay, sir," said the old lady, "with the sign of the Prince Llewellyn."

"Be that as it may," returned Dr. Woodville; "but you may perhaps call to mind that these same youths dwelt three days in your house, and visited all the wonders in the neighbourhood with the excellent man your husband; they call you Norton, I think; well, this is wonderful—I was one of these young men. But now, tell me, madam, would it please you to leave this place, and live in a towered city, in comfort and comparative affluence, with your pretty little handmaid there? Speak but the word,"—but Mrs. Norton could not speak; she

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had dropped on the chair, and was sobbing violently, while her fair granddaughter had run to her, and was holding her head upon her breast, weeping with her, she knew not why; and Sophia had tears also in her eyes, and my mother too. Dr. Woodville and my father could not stand this, and they hastened out of the house, while my mother did all she could to restore the old lady.

"I do not know exactly what Dr. Woodville means to do for you, Mrs. Norton," said my mother, "but you may be assured that he will not forget you: he is a pious, and, in consequence, a truly kind man; you have borne trouble with a calm mind, why then cannot you rest with equal calmness on your heavenly Father when he smiles?"

"Grandmamma," said Emmeline, "remember the verse you have taught me,—

'Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace,
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.'"

"But to think, Emmy," said the old lady, "that all this should come through the medium of your dear grandfather—blessed be his memory—and so many have been the times when I have thought him too hospitable, and too ready to feed and house the stranger, that it is that that cuts me; but bless that good gentleman, and bless you, little ladies, who brought him here."

Now I have made my book a great deal longer than I ever intended it should be, and what is to be done now but to tell the parts of the story which come next in fewer words.

Dr. Woodville went home the next day, and made himself so busy that in a very short time he got a place for Mrs. Norton in a charitable institution for clergymen's widows, established by an old gentleman whom my mother knew very well when she was a child.

In these buildings live many widows; each of them has a little kitchen, a parlour, and two sleeping rooms, and I know not how much they have a-year, but it was what Mrs. Norton would have thought a great deal of money; and before the summer was gone, he sent mamma ten pounds, and asked her to see that Mrs.

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Norton and Emmeline had proper clothes, and were sent off immediately.

They came to our house for a week after their furniture was sold; for Mrs. Norton took nothing with her but such things as she had had in her husband's lifetime, and when they parted from us they shed many tears.

We saw them once again after that, and only once: for Mrs. Norton did not live above ten years after she was removed, and Emmeline married an affluent tradesman, in a distant town, where, as her letters tell me, for she writes to me every year, she is a happy wife and happy mother, having fallen into the hands of one who fears his God; but you shall have an account of this our first and last visit to Mrs. Norton, in the place which good Dr. Woodville had procured for her.

We were travelling to see an uncle who lived in the north of England, and as we passed through the town in which Dr. Woodville lived, we intended to spend the evening with him; so we walked from the inn to Dr. Woodville's house, which was in the cathedral yard, but it was summer-time, and the family were gone to the sea; this disappointed us, and we turned away, intending to inquire next for Mrs. Norton; but as we passed one of the wide beautiful doors of the cathedral, it was open, and we heard the harmony of the organ, and choristers chanting the evening service. We all agreed to go in there before we sought Mrs. Norton, and as Sophia and I had never heard cathedral service before, we thought almost that we heard angels singing as we walked along the lofty aisles towards the choir, which is that part of the cathedral where the service is performed. When we got in we were shown into a seat; but there were few people present, excepting the singing men, and the little choristers in their white surplices.

At length, however, Sophia whispered, "Emmeline," and turning my eyes as she directed, I saw Emmeline nearly opposite to me, standing by her grandmother; and, oh, how pretty she did appear! her gentle eyes being fixed with looks of love upon us, and her cheeks all red and glowing with delight, and she was dressed so very neatly, without any ornament, as becoming one who lives by charity, for by charity she did live,

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although that charity was one so noble and so ample. My mother remarked how proper this was, or I might otherwise not have thought of it.

As soon as the service was over, she came quickly to us, and brought us to her grandmother. What delight did the old lady express at the sight of us! she called us her benefactors—I am sure I was not deserving of the name—and brought us to her neat little dwelling, where we spent one of the happiest evenings of our lives. My father made us kneel down before we parted, to join in an act of thanksgiving to the Father of the fatherless and the Husband of the widow.

THE END OF EMMELINE.

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OBEDIENCE.

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OBEDIENCE.

The venerable Mr. Scott being one day asked, what particular means he had used to produce so good an effect upon his children, all of whom had turned out remarkably well, replied, I know of nothing very peculiar in my plans or systems, excepting that I made a point that it should be a settled matter, before the fifth year of each child's life, who was to be the master,—the father or the son.

Had the unhappy Eli settled this matter in like manner with the excellent man above spoken of, his history would not now stand on record, after the lapse of three thousand years, as a warning (and one of the most awful nature) to all indolent and careless parents.

Would pious parents but consider, that during the infancy of their children they stand in the place, in some degree, of the Almighty, as it respects these children, and that their little ones ought to be taught to exercise towards them, during their infant years, that sort of faith and of entire dependence which must hereafter be transferred to God,—how much trouble would be spared to both! We are indeed taught that faith in Christ is the gift of God, and can only be exercised by regenerate persons, while filial piety in some respects may be felt by the natural man, and has often been exercised by the heathen; nevertheless, humanly speaking, we cannot doubt that where the habit of obedience and respect is early enforced towards the earthly parent, the individual is more likely, than in opposite cases, to place his entire confidence and dependence on his heavenly Father, whenever it shall please that heavenly Parent to reveal himself to his soul.

Let it be remembered, that the matter was settled between Mr. Scott and his children respecting the person who was to be the master, even before the child was five years of age. Some persons might argue that

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children under five are merely pretty playthings, and that decisive measures are seldom necessary with them so early. To this objection we shall say nothing, but shall proceed to relate a little narrative which has lately come to our knowledge.

Celia and Belinda were co-heiresses, and married early in life; Celia to a country gentleman of easy fortune, and Belinda to an officer, with whom she went abroad immediately after her marriage. Several years passed away, during which time these sisters had communication only by letter; but after a while Colonel S——, the husband of Belinda, being appointed for a short time to a situation where his wife could not accompany him, she returned to her native country, with one little girl, aged at that time about three years, the only child remaining of three, the other two having fallen victims to a burning climate, in which they had been born.

Immediately on her landing, she hastened to Celia's house, where she found a truly affectionate welcome, and there was pressed to remain as long as it pleased Providence that she should be separated from her husband. During the absence of Belinda, Celia had become the mother of two children, a boy at that time aged five, and a little girl, who was of the same age as Lucy, the daughter of Belinda, or it might be a few months older.

The first delightful feelings experienced by Belinda in finding herself in the house and the arms of an only sister had scarcely passed away, before her attention was forcibly and not very pleasantly drawn towards her nephew and niece. They were remarkably fine children, as far as health and vigour are concerned, and they were playful, active, and intelligent, though they possessed not that delicacy of feature and sweetness of expression which even every stranger could not but notice in her own child. Lucy had suffered much in infancy from the same causes which had terminated the lives of her little brother and sister; and she was also, at the time of which we speak, much exhausted with the fatigues of a long voyage, and a journey by land of more than a hundred miles; whereas her little cousins, Robert and Julia, had ever breathed the invigorating air of the temperate climate in which they first saw the day, and had never experienced any of those difficulties

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which fall to the lot of travellers. Yet, with all these advantages, their aunt soon discovered with regret that they were already completely opposed to all discipline —not that they did not at times yield to necessity, as all creatures must; but they had no idea of submitting to the will of their parents, uninfluenced by other motives. So far from obeying at the first word, they never failed either to turn a deaf ear to their mother's words, or to dispute her will, and that sometimes in the smallest and most unimportant points; and though they were not often absolutely rude to her, yet they were not afraid of arguing with her, and of opposing her desires.

Belinda arrived at the house of her brother-in-law about seven in the evening; it was summer-time, and her sister ran out from the drawing-room, where the family were at tea, to embrace and welcome her sister; the two children followed her, and took little Lucy by the hand, and led her between them after their mother.

There were several visiters in the drawing-room, and the children withdrew to a distant part of the room to get acquainted with each other in their own way. More than half an hour passed, during which period they were very quiet, but at length they began to make a noise; and as the little foreigner's voice was as loud as that of her cousins, both the mothers called to them at once to be less noisy.

The noise however proceeded, and indeed became louder, on which Celia again commanded silence, and Belinda repeated her orders. The noise however continued, though Lucy's voice was heard no longer; on which Celia's husband, whom we shall call Ernestus, rose from his seat, and going up to his children, reiterated his wife's injunctions in an angry tone, which produced a momentary silence, but only a momentary one, for he was scarcely seated again before the uproar recommenced. On this Belinda called her daughter to her, made her sit at her feet, and told her not to move from where she had placed her.

The little creature, being thus situated, remained perfectly quiet, admiring the flowers on the beautiful Brussel's carpet on which she was seated, and tracing their outlines with her forefinger. Celia and Belinda had many interesting questions to ask each other, and it was not a little thing that disturbed their reciprocal in-

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quiries; for a little while, therefore, their attention was withdrawn from the children, whose noise had now ceased, till suddenly Belinda felt Lucy moving from her feet, and perceived that Robert had got her by the arm to drag her away.

"My dear Robert," said Belinda, "you must not meddle with your cousin. She must sit still at my feet."

"Why must she?" asked Robert.

"Because I have ordered her so to do, my dear," replied Belinda.

"And why did you order her, aunt?"

"I never give reasons for what I do (to Lucy), my love," answered Belinda. "Little children must obey their parents, and not ask for reasons."

"And why may not they ask for reasons?" said Robert.

"Because little children cannot understand all the reasons which their parents may have for giving them such and such orders; and the shortest and easiest way for parents and little children is, for parents to give their orders, and for little children to obey them, without asking questions." Robert made no answer to this, but gave Lucy another pull, on which Belinda took the little girl on her lap, and Robert, being offended, pushed himself between his father and mother at the table.

Now there was seated at that tea-table a grave old gentleman, in a white wig, and this old gentleman had attended to all that passed, and when he saw Belinda take Lucy on her lap, he said, "And so, madam, I see you are for the old-fashioned notions of implicit obedience; you are not for reasoning with an infant wearing a coral and bells."

"No, sir," replied Belinda, smiling; "you must recollect that I belong to the army, where we find that a strict discipline saves a vast deal of trouble. I am not inclined to give reasons to infants who cannot understand them, but I wish so to act by my children that they may approve all my motives when they become parents themselves."

"Then you do not suppose," replied the old gentleman, dryly, "that that babe in your lap is able to appreciate the reciprocal duties of parents and children."

"She is able to appreciate the value of a slice of cake," replied Belinda, asking her sister's leave to give Lucy some plumcake, on which the little girl was medi

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tating with deep anxiety: and here the discourse would have dropped, if Celia had not taken it up, remarking that she was not entirely of the same opinion with her sister, respecting requiring implicit obedience from children, previous to convincing their reason, adding, that the obedience which is derived from the conviction of the will is always more cheerful and more hearty than that which proceeds from a slavish feeling of necessity, appealing at the same time to her husband for a confirmation of her assertion, who immediately brought forward certain authors, who have risen up in these latter days, to prove that Solomon was strangely mistaken when he asserted that foolishness was so bound in the heart of a child as now and then to require the rod of correction in order to displace it. How long this discussion might have lasted cannot now be ascertained, had it not been suddenly interrupted by Robert, who, in repeating his attempts upon his little cousin, had crawled under the tea-table, and displaced one of the legs, on which one of the leaves began to give way, and the tea-urn had nearly slipped into the lap of the old gentleman above mentioned, had he not saved himself from further injury by receiving the hissing enemy on his open palms.

As soon as it was ascertained that the gentleman was not materially hurt, there was a general smile around the tea-table at the issue of the argument. Politeness, however, compelled every one present to be silent, and the conversation took another turn without loss of time.

The present specimen will probably suffice to show our readers the manner in which Celia and Ernestus brought up their children. Whatever Belinda might think, she felt that any interference with her sister's plans would not answer in her present situation as an inmate of the family, and she was the more delicate in this matter, as she perceived that both her sister and Ernestus were extremely particular in never meddling with her management of her own little girl. In all other matters, nothing could be more cordial and candid than the behaviour of the brother and his wife to their sister. Notwithstanding which, Belinda could not witness without great pain the rebellious spirit of her nephew, and the weakness of his parents. Time, however, passed on; the winter months wore away, and spring appeared with all her flowers. Belinda began

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to observe with delight fresh roses blooming on the cheeks of her lovely little Lucy, and to see the fair and gentle little creature begin to play and frisk around her, when she took her out to walk with her, to show her the lambs, and place her hands for the first time on the primroses and violets, the eldest and not the least lovely daughters of the English summer.

About this time Celia and her husband went to a neighbouring town for a fortnight, taking Robert with them, and leaving Belinda with Lucy and Julia, in whose society this amiable woman promised herself more happiness than in the visit in which her brother and sister had pressed her to accompany them. Belinda had precisely those habits and that disposition which render grown people pleasing to children.

She was lively, could be playful and amusing at proper times; knew when to interfere, and when to let the little ones under her care proceed with their own pleasures; and was never fretful, but always decisive.

The fortnight she spent in the absence of her sister was among the happiest of her life. She had been prepared for that happiness by an unexpectedly agreeable letter from her husband, with a hint that he might speedily return; and the calm and blameless tenor of these fourteen days, spent in no other society than that of two little girls, the elder of whom was only four years old, was the very best which could be conceived for keeping alive the flame of pious gratitude which had been kindled by the reception of the colonel's letter.

She rose with the children at the dawn of day, and walked out with them while yet the herbs were wet with the dew of evening. She breakfasted early with them, and then taking one or other on her lap, gave them a short easy lesson, which continued only about ten minutes, and was renewed about four times in the day; the children were then permitted to play in the room, while their aunt read, or worked, or drew, or wrote. Belinda dined at an early hour with them, and again led them into the fields; and before bed-time she told them little stories, and taught them to pray, leading their young minds to the only source of perfect happiness. During those peaceful days, how many little holy lessons were insinuated I could not pretend to say; for a pious mother, having her eye continually fixed on the goal to which she desires to lead her babes, cannot

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cease to warn and apprize her little heedless ones of every devious step; and inasmuch as love is the regulator of her conduct, it cannot be otherwise than that she should endeavour to direct their wanderings with a gentle hand.

Thus passed Belinda's happy days. But before we proceed in our history, it is our wish to insinuate a word of advice to young mothers, on a subject suggested by what has been written above. The times when children's hearts lie most open to parents and instructers are the hours of relaxation; these are the occasions in which the evil one is commonly most busy, and the parent most off his guard. It cannot be expected of the father of the family, whose occupations generally lie without, that he should be troubled with the noise of children when he returns to his home; but the mother should make it a matter of principle to accustom herself, from the commencement of her becoming a mother, to that sort of mixed murmur which must exist in the room where children play. Let the writer of this volume entreat every young mother to endeavour to acquire the habit, as soon as possible, of carrying on her studies, her needle-work, her family accounts, and her different occupations, in the presence of her children, and amid the bustle of the nursery or school-room. By this important habit, when duly attained, more benefits accrue than can be enumerated in the small space which our limits allow: but enough has no doubt already been said to give a subject of meditation to many of those into whose hands this narrative may fall.

Belinda, during the first few days, had several slight contests with Julia, before the little girl could be made to understand that she would be obeyed. On one occasion, the two children, being seated on the carpet, were going to cut their doll's hair, each of them having taken a pair of scissors from the work-table. Belinda perceived what they were about, although engaged with a book; and it was enough for her, as it respected Lucy, to say, "Don't do that; bring me the scissors;" but Julia thought proper to dispute the command as it related to herself. Belinda repeated her direction, on which the following short conversation ensued.

"Me will cut doll's hair," said Julia.

"It will not grow again as yours does," replied Belinda, trying what reason would do, as she knew that

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this was her sister's method with her children; "the doll is only a piece of wood, and the hair does not grow out of its head; it is sown on."

"Doll is not wood," replied Julia; "doll is doll."

"But its hair does not grow out of its head," said Belinda.

"It does grow, and me will cut it," answered Julia.

"Naughty girl," said Lucy, "you must not say will."

"Me will say will, and me will cut the hair, me will," replied Julia.

"Mamma will not let you," whispered Lucy; "mamma will make us be good."

Julia raised her dimpled hand, and slapped Lucy's face; on which Belinda rose, took the scissors and doll from her, and led her to the foot of the sofa, where having roared for two minutes, sobbed another minute, and cried softly and tenderly another, she stretched out her arms to her aunt, and was received with starting tears into her maternal arms.

This was the last quarrel, though not the first, that Belinda had with Julia, and happened on the third day of Celia's absence. The important matter was then settled between little Julia and her aunt respecting which was to be the ruler; and how important that settlement was will appear by subsequent events.

At the end of fourteen days the family returned; they did not arrive till about six in the evening. Belinda ran to receive them at the carriage door, but was somewhat startled, on lifting little Robert down, at the inflamed appearance of his eyes, and the high colour of his cheeks. "Is Robert quite well?" she said to her sister, as soon as they had entered the drawing-room, and were preparing to sit down to tea.

"Not quite so," replied Celia, "he has been very sick in the carriage. I fear that he has eaten something which has not agreed with him."

"Had he not better have a little medicine immediately?" said Belinda; "I think that one can never be wrong in cleansing the stomach, when there is any reason to think it is disordered."

"Medicine, that is physic," said Robert; "I won't have any."

"Nay, my dear," replied the mother, "is it not better, dear Robert, to take a little medicine than to be sick, and have pain in the head?"

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"No," replied Robert.

"But hear reason, my dear," and the mother argued very reasonably, under the supposition that she had a rational creature to argue with. Robert listened to his mother till she had finished her exordium, and then fell-to to devour a portion from a large plate of bread and butter which had just been set on the table.

In the mean time Julia, who for the last ten days had appeared to be the most amiable little creature in the world, had taken up her former character, and was beginning to take all possible liberties, being only slightly reproved by her mother, at the same time looking at her aunt, in the first place, to ascertain whether she would now dare to interfere; and in the second place, with a kind of triumphant expression, which seemed to say, So now you will not venture to reprove me. Belinda felt hurt, for the sake of the dear child, whom she had already begun to love most tenderly; yet her attention was soon drawn from the little girl to her brother, for Robert, after having eaten a few morsels of bread and butter, was taken with another fit of sickness, and was carried to bed.

Celia went up with her son to the nursery, and came down in about an hour, saying that he was better, and fallen asleep, and then began to relate the events of their journey; but as the mother did not ask Belinda's advice respecting her son, she was rather delicate in offering it, though she ventured to recommend again a dose of physic.

The next morning Robert was very heavy and languid, and his mother seemed uneasy, and called her sister to look at him; the child was excessively dull, and he was at one time very hot, and at another seized with cold fits; there was also a general redness in the skin.

"I would certainly advise a doctor to be sent for," said Belinda; "it must be some hours before he can be here, and in the mean time give a powerful dose of physic."

"I think I will," said Celia; and she hastened to prepare one, while Belinda stood looking at the child, having no doubt that his illness was merely the effect of a disordered stomach.

Celia soon returned with the draught, and a piece of sugar to take after it; and giving the potion into her sister's hands, she approached her son, raised him in

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her arms, and addressing him with kindness, said, "Now, my Robert, be a good boy, take this medicine, and you shall have a nice lump of sugar."

"I won't, mother," replied Robert; "I won't take it."

"Nay, my dear boy," said Celia; "think how ill you are, and this will make you quite well."

"I won't take it, I won't have it," said the boy; "take it away."

It were too tedious to tell all that the mother urged to persuade her son to take the medicine; the contest ended by Robert spilling half the medicine over his mother, and spitting out the other half, when forced by his aunt to take it into his mouth; and it was then settled that nothing more could be done till the doctor came, and the doctor did not arrive till sunset, during which interval Robert's disease was continually gaining ground; and so much valuable time was lost, which ought to have been used in weakening its virulence.

When the surgeon had seen the child, and felt his pulse, he instantly ordered a strong dose of medicine to be administered, saying that this should have been done as soon as the child complained; on which the mother immediately hastened to compound a second dose, and without informing the surgeon of what had happened with regard to the first dose, brought it into the chamber, and asked the surgeon to present it to her son.

Though Robert seemed to be excessively heavy, yet he was perfectly aware of what awaited him; and he no sooner saw the cup in the surgeon's hands than he exclaimed, "I won't have physic."

"But you must, my little man," said the surgeon; "you must either take this, or be very ill indeed."

"Then I will be ill," replied Robert.

His mother rebuked him for this, and the surgeon held the cup to him.

"I shan't take it," repeated the child.

"Yes, you will, my dear Robert, I am sure you will, my darling," said the mother.

"I won't then." We need not add who said this, on which the surgeon coloured, but did not speak. "I shall never get him to take it," said Celia, "he has such an aversion to medicine; what shall I do?" and the tears stood in her eyes.

"Take it he must, madam," said the surgeon. "Do you leave the room, and I, with the help of this lady,

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will make him take it, that is, if you do not wish to see him die."

Celia was too much alarmed to dispute what the medical gentleman proposed. She left the room, and after a violent opposition on the part of Robert, the surgeon and Belinda contrived to make the child swallow two-thirds of the medicine; but it was impossible to make him lie still after he had taken it, so as to assist the stomach in keeping it down. The child even strained to throw it up, and in less than two minutes his sheets and coverlet were all discoloured with it.

The surgeon walked to the window, saying, "He must have another dose of some sort;" and then added, for he was an old practitioner, and somewhat testy,—"if parents could see what I have seen of the effects of humouring children, surely they would not be so cruelly kind,—so foolishly fond;" and then addressing Belinda,—"I can assure you, madam," he said, "that more children are lost in illness from the effects of the want of parental discipline, than by any other cause that experience can assign; but, come, show me your medicine-chest, and let me try if I cannot compound something which may deceive the palate of this wayward urchin; for, after all, he is a fine lad, and I should be sorry to see him continue long in his present state."

"What, sir," said Belinda, "do you apprehend any danger?"

"Danger!" repeated the surgeon,—"the stomach is violently disordered; and if we don't relieve it there may be great danger."

The surgeon was more successful in his next attempt, for having mixed some powders in sweetmeat, he persuaded an old nurse of the family to present it; and the child being for *once* deceived, swallowed the powders in the sweetmeat, the nurse having implicated her veracity by solemnly assuring the suspicious child that there was no physic in the spoon, but all sweet nice jelly for her darling boy.

The doctor then took his leave, promising to return by sunrise, having another patient to visit very early in the morning, in the same direction, and ordering that nothing should be given to the child all night but barley-water.

As he went out by the door he somewhat alarmed Belinda by saying, "I thought I saw another child

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sleeping in the nursery; I would advise you to remove it, and keep it separate from the patient."

"What do you fear, sir?" said Belinda.

"I cannot precisely ascertain that there is any thing to fear," replied the old gentleman; "but it is a rule of mine never to allow a child who is well to remain in the same room with one who is sick."

On this hint, Belinda immediately went up into the nursery, and having informed her sister of what she was going to do, carried the sleeping Julia to her own apartment, and laid her by Lucy in her own bed, where she left them for the night, being resolved to watch by her nephew.

Robert had a very uneasy night, and complained of his throat. He was excessively irritable, and frequently sick, and his fever increased every hour. It was evident to his mother and aunt that some sort of eruption had already appeared on his skin, and they both watched with impatience the dawn of day, as the forerunner of the return of the surgeon.

At length the surgeon came, and having carefully examined his patient, he said, "I have now little doubt that your son, madam, has the scarlet fever; but don't alarm yourself" (for Celia had burst into tears), "he may do very well, it is a complaint incident to children; but he must be made to take his medicines, and to attend to my injunctions."

It was natural for Belinda, in addition to her own uneasiness respecting her sister and nephew, to think of her little Lucy, her only child, whose father was now so far away; and her apprehensions were greatly heightened by one of the female servants, who, having slept in the room with Lucy and Julia, with a thoughtfulness not too common in persons of her station, came to apprize her mistress, before the surgeon went, that the two young ladies had been restless during the night, and that Miss Lucy, though not yet awake, moaned very much, and was very hot.

Belinda flew to the bedside of the little girls, and it may well be conceived what the feelings of this tender mother were when she discovered that the report of the servant respecting her little girl was but too true. Lucy was still asleep, but her sweet face was flushed, and her dimpled hand burning hot. Julia too startled in her sleep, and moaned, and Belinda no longer doubted that

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they were both affected with one and the same disease with poor Robert. When the surgeon came, he confirmed Belinda's worst fears, and Celia was summoned to the bedside of the little girls, who by this time were thoroughly roused.

"What is the first step we must take, sir?" said Belinda, trying to restrain her feelings, and endeavouring to cast her cares on a tender Providence.

"A dose of medicine must be immediately administered," said the surgeon. "A great deal depends upon taking these things in time;" and Belinda immediately hastened to compound these medicines.

When she returned, she found that her sister had removed Julia into the nursery, naturally wishing to have both of her sick children under her own eye. Belinda immediately despatched a servant with Julia's portion, and sitting down on the bed by Lucy, who had again fallen into a state of stupor, roused her gently, and holding the cup to her, "My little girl," she said, "you must take this medicine." The surgeon, who had been watching the removal of Julia, returned at that moment, and stood still, as if anxious to ascertain that the medicine which he had prescribed was taken.

Lucy, being roused by her mother, started when she perceived the nauseous smell of the draught which was presented to her; and turned her head aside, saying, "Oh, no! dear mamma, no!"

"My child, it must be taken," replied Belinda, gently, though decidedly; on which the little girl put both her hands to the cup, and drank its contents off at once, although she heaved a sigh more than once during the process.

"There's my little jewel," said the surgeon, smiling; and producing a ripe orange from his pocket, "and now for a bit of orange, and all will be well." The worthy man then gave some further directions to Belinda, and returned to the nursery, where he found Celia still holding the cup to Julia, who was resisting all her entreaties to empty it. "No! me no take it. Me won't take it," said the lisping babe, who was farther gone in disobedience than in years. "Me won't have it;" and just as the doctor approached the bed, she succeeded in striking over the cup, and deluging the bed with its unsavoury contents.

"See, sir, see," said Celia, "I cannot get her to take it."

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"But, madam, she must take it," said the doctor, sternly. "You must contrive to give it, or I will not answer for the consequences."

"Me won't have it—me won't have it," repeated Julia. "Go away, nasty man, me won't have it."

"Hush! my dear, my sweet child," said Celia, soothingly; and winking at the doctor, "and you shan't have any more nasty stuff;" and taking the surgeon aside, she asked if something might not be so compounded with sweetmeat as to deceive the child.

The surgeon immediately repaired to the medicine-chest, and, with the help of the nurse, mixed up some powders with a little treacle, of which Julia was very fond when in health; and the nurse, as the least suspicious person, was then sent up with the spoon into the nursery, while the mother and the surgeon followed, cautiously concealing themselves behind the curtains, where they had the satisfaction of hearing the following dialogue:—

The nurse first spoke. "Here, my darling—here, my pretty miss. The naughty doctor shall not give my darling any more nasty stuff. Nurse won't let him come near my little beauty. Nurse is come to bring something nice to put the nasty taste out of my baby's pretty mouth. Nice sweet treacle in a silver spoon."

"Treacle in a silver spoon!" repeated Robert, who had heard all that had passed from his bed. "Don't take it, Julia, there is physic in it."

"Physic! Master Robert; physic in treacle! sweet nice treacle!" said the nurse.

"Was not there physic in the sweetmeat you gave me last night! will you say there was not, nurse, will you?" said Robert.

"Physic in sweetmeat! Master Robert, who ever heard of such a thing!" replied the nurse. "Did not you see the cook boil up the jam last summer, and did not you lick the stewpan!"

"And can't physic be put in after the sweetmeat is made?" remarked Robert, as rationally as his parents could have wished; "and in treacle too! and so, Julia, don't touch the spoon."

"Me won't have it, me won't have it," screamed Julia, trying to dash away the spoon which the nurse was approaching to her mouth; "me won't take it, me won't take it."

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At this minute the surgeon came forth from behind the curtain, and tried some arguments and entreaties; but the captious child would neither attend to the one or the other, and the old gentleman, feeling his anger rise, walked down stairs, followed by the weak mother, where, having given his directions in a very decided manner, he took his leave, promising to return in the afternoon.

The fever which had seized the children was attended with many malignant symptoms; and after a certain time their throats all became inflamed and ulcerated. Robert and Julia had naturally finer constitutions than Lucy, who had been born in a hot climate, and was in consequence more liable to inflammation; hence this fever was worse for the first few days with her than with her little cousins: but there was one thing in her favour, she was *obedient*, there was no violent effort or irritating contest with her when desired to take medicine, or to gargle her throat. At first it was difficult to make this little creature understand how to gargle, and it was pitiable to witness the pains she took to learn; but when she had once learned it, there was no further trouble in making her do it, and then the peaceful and happy state of her mind was of the greatest benefit to her; and it was sweet to see how the pious lessons, which from babyhood had been inculcated by her affectionate mother, at this time administered consolation to her tender mind.

"If I die, mamma," she one day said to her mother, "I shall go to heaven."

"Do you think so, my love?" replied Belinda, restraining her emotions with difficulty.

"Yes," said Lucy, "because of our Saviour, who loves me, and who died for me." And then she spoke of heaven, and angels, and lying in her Redeemer's bosom, and being comforted by him; and she often called her mother to lie down by her, and hold her head on her breast, and talk to her about Christ and heaven; though for one or two days, at the height of her fever, she hardly knew any one, and could not express herself articulately.

At length the worst seemed to be over with Lucy; her fever abated, and she slept with little interruption from midnight till dawn of day.

During the last forty-eight hours in which the life of

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Lucy seemed as it were to hang by a hair, Belinda had been so wholly occupied that she could only inquire, from time to time, respecting the health of her sister's children, feeling herself more than ever depressed by the sad reports which were brought to her from the nursery.

But this morning, her heart being full of gratitude for the blessed change in her still sleeping infant, she left her with the housemaid, who had been very kind and attentive during the whole course of the illness, and hastened to the nursery.

Bad as the reports she had heard were, they were short of the truth. It was indeed a scene of distress she had then to witness. Her brother and sister, the nurse, and the surgeon were standing round Robert's bed. Celia had wept till she could weep no more, and was now a pale and neglected figure of fixed grief. A still more solemn and deeper sadness rested on the features of Ernestus. The nurse was weeping, and the surgeon looked fixedly sorrowful.

But oh! how changed was little Robert! death sat on his infant features, his eyes were closed, and he breathed convulsively.

Through the whole course of his illness he had either absolutely refused to take his medicines, or when compelled to take them (when actually drenched by force), had excited himself so violently as absolutely to counteract the effects of the medicine; neither had persuasions or threats been available at any time to induce him to gargle his throat. Hence the fever and sore throat had been permitted to take their destructive course, and the unhappy parents had now nothing left but to await in helpless misery the effects of their own misguided conduct, and self-sufficient assurance that their own wisdom was superior to that of Solomon, the gifted and inspired of God. The deep sigh which Belinda could not suppress was the first thing which drew the attention of the unhappy parents to their sister. Celia gave her her hand, but no one spoke; at length the surgeon, with a hopeless and helpless look, which seemed to say, human art can do no more, turned from Robert's bed to the little cot where Julia lay, and Belinda, following him, saw with agony the devastations which the fever had already made in her little niece. She lay apparently insensible on her pillow, while a female

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servant was bathing her burning temples with vinegar and water.

"There might be some hope here," whispered the surgeon, "could we get any medicine down; but the want of discipline, the want of obedience"—here the surgeon added no more for a moment, and then said, "would the mother trust you? you have been an excellent nurse with your own: in all human probability, had your little bark not learned to obey the helm, it could not have weathered the storm."

"Propose that I should take charge of this little girl, sir," said Belinda, "and I will do my best. I am ready to divide my attention between her and my own, and perhaps I might be able to influence the dear babe."

"Influence!" repeated the surgeon, testily; "influence! I hate the words influence and reason. You are a woman of sense; say compel at once, it saves a great deal of trouble both to parent and child." The old gentleman, then turning to the unhappy parents, made the proposal he meditated without loss of time, extolling the skill of Belinda as a nurse; and plainly stating, at the same time, that Julia, without care, must sink under the disease; and as no objection was made, the surgeon himself assisted in removing the little cot with the child in it, from that room which was doomed in a few hours to be the chamber of death; and from weak and irresolute nurses, to where she was to receive every attention which wisdom and affection could bestow.

We will spare our reader the pain of entering too particularly into the scenes which speedily followed the removal of Julia from her brother's chamber.

Before the noon of that day, little Robert breathed his last; and the distracted mother was carried to her room, wildly lamenting her first-born, her beautiful, her beloved boy; while the more silent grief of the father was more affecting even than the tears and cries of the mother. How much of blame they took to themselves on the occasion of their son's death we have no means of ascertaining. Certain, however, it is, that when blessed some years afterward with another little Robert, their plans of education were entirely changed; and Solomon was more frequently quoted by them at the tea-table than J. J. Rousseau, Mrs. Wolstonecraft, or any of their disciples.

But while every variety of melancholy scene was

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passing in the chamber of poor Robert, whose remains were consigned to the grave in the yard of the parish church, Belinda was doubly occupied by her own little daughter and the only remaining child of her afflicted sister.

Lucy's convalescence continued from the morning of the death of her poor cousin, and Belinda was enabled to consign her, in some degree, to the care of the kind housemaid, while she gave her chief attention to poor Julia.

The little creature lay in a heavy doze after her removal, till it was time to administer a medicine on which the surgeon depended much. Belinda then went up to the cot, and raising the child on her arm, "Julia, my beloved," she said, "you will be a good girl, and take your medicine."

Some moments passed before the little girl was sufficiently aroused to know what was required of her; but this matter was no sooner understood than she exerted all her little remaining strength to resist it.

Belinda immediately took upon herself a tone of authority such as she had used in the case of the doll, on which Julia called out for her mamma to help her.

"The medicine must be taken, Julia," said Belinda, calmly; "you know that when I say a thing it must be done; and if you will not take it cheerfully, I shall force it down your throat."

Julia looked very hard at her aunt, and having ascertained that no mamma or nurse was near, she made an effort, and swallowed the potion, after which she fell back on her bed, and was asleep in a few moments, the blessings of her aunt descending on her pillow.

"Sleep on, poor babe," said Belinda, "and may God bless the healing draught! May you be spared to your unhappy mother, and may you live to be a blessing to her!"

Another medicine was to be administered in two hours after the first—there was a second struggle between Belinda and Julia, but it was far less vehement than the former; the child swallowed this second medicine, and dozed again; and again Belinda roused her some time afterward to endeavour to make her gargle. This was a difficult matter, but Belinda carried her point; and thus, with one thing and another, that long, sad day wore away.

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When the surgeon returned in the evening, he found poor Robert no more, Lucy decidedly better, and Julia no worse.

Belinda was up all night with Julia, and the child suffered much, but, by the Divine blessing on the medicines, now duly and regularly administered, she was easier towards morning, and her sleep was more natural, and from that period she began to recover. Her convalescence was more rapid and regular than that of little Lucy, on account of the natural strength of her constitution; and when the afflicted Celia was so far recovered as to remember and ask for her little girl, Belinda had the inexpressible delight of carrying her child into her chamber and laying her in her bed by her side. Thus the storm passed away, yet, as we have seen, not before it had made one wreck, and left an example which we have recorded, for the benefit, we trust, of many parents; for none, surely, will read this little narrative without asking themselves how it stands between them and their children, and whether they have that due influence over their little ones, the want of which on the part of his parents was, in all human probability, the cause of poor Robert's death.

And now I intend to close my history with one short and pleasant scene.

It was a lovely morning in July, about three months after the death of poor little Robert, when Belinda, with Julia and Lucy, the two little girls being now restored to health and bloom, and tenderly attached to each other, having now no other young companion, set out to carry flowers to the grave of little Robert, for Belinda often led them there, as Julia was now constantly trusted with her, and there gave them many sweet lessons on the nature of death and of eternity, showing how the sting of the former, and the dread of the latter, are removed by Christ, the Incarnate God, through his death, his sufferings, and his perfect obedience. In this place Belinda awakened the feelings of Julia, and directed those of Lucy into their proper channels, and she herself enjoyed some sweetly melancholy seasons in the contemplation of the passing nature of all temporal things, and the unchangeableness of those which are eternal.

But on the day mentioned above, while the children were shedding their flowers from their little baskets on

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the grave, the sound of carriage-wheels was heard on the other side of the thick yew-trees which separated the churchyard from the high-road. These presently ceased, and the next moment a gentleman in a travelling dress appeared at the wicket.

"Papa, papa, it is papa!" screamed little Lucy, flying into the extended arms of that dear parent; and from that instant the happy family were united never again to endure those long and anxious separations, the pains of which none can conceive who have not, in some degree, experienced them.

I am happy to add, that both these children, under the kind and judicious instruction which they received, grew up in habits of implicit obedience to their parents. They found that the *promise* annexed to the fifth commandment was fulfilled in their own experience, and that in keeping it there was a "great reward."

Let my young readers, while in childhood or youth, learn, that self-will and obstinacy are entirely opposed to their own happiness—that submission to parents is a duty enjoined by God—and that the path of obedience is the path of peace and happiness.

END OF OBEDIENCE.

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THE GIPSY BABES.

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THE GIPSY BABES.

I AM now, my gentle reader, about to give you a curious history respecting the early life of my grandfather and grandmother: a story which I heard my grandfather relate for the first time on an occasion when all the family were collected, one Christmas-day, in the dining-room of the old family mansion, now in the possession of my elder brother. The things I have to tell you happened at the least a hundred years ago; for my grandfather, were he still living, would be a hundred and five years old: he has, however, been in his grave at least twenty years, and my grandmother nearly thirty, and it was not long before the death of the latter that the story was related for the amusement of the assembled family.

My grandfather began, as we were all sitting round the fire after dinner, by laughing at myself and my sister on account of our black eyes and hair, smilingly adding, that we had more right to look like gipsies than perhaps we suspected: and then, on our all uniting in making the request, he said he would explain what he had asserted by telling us a story which had long been promised us respecting himself, which we well understood had something to do with gipsies, though we had as yet been considered too young by our parents to have the whole matter laid before us. "Well then," said my grandfather, "stir the fire, and let every one sit still, and you shall hear such a tale as will surprise you, and, I hope, as all ended well, will likewise please you."

On hearing that we were all to sit still, we began to fidget and change places, as children invariably do on such occasions: my youngest sister crept closer to her mother, my eldest brother sidled nearer to his grandfather, and I, who was without the circle, crept in between my two elder sisters, and couched myself like a

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dog at their feet. My grandfather coughed two or three times, settled his wig, and thus began:—

"I must commence by saying, that I was not always an old man with thin legs and a sharp nose; but was once a little cherub boy with curling auburn hair, dark-blue eyes, and, as my mother used to say, had a thousand pretty dimples enclosing as many enchanting smiles. My father possessed this house, in which we are now all assembled, and the estate surrounding it. He was a worthy man; but in the early part of his life, before the black ox had trod on his toe, as the old saying is, was hot and fiery, and was for having every thing bend to his humour. He was a very different man before his death; but I am now to speak of him in his more early days.

"My mother was one of the loveliest examples of female gentleness I can remember. I have, indeed, seen her equal, but never her superior: a face more sweet, an eye more mild, a heart more tender, surely never graced a daughter of Eve; but she was a true Christian, an humble, unpresuming one, yet one who never made a loud profession, and whose left hand knew not the good works with which her right hand was perpetually exercised. My father was a justice of peace in this county, and a very active magistrate.

"The country at that time was much more wooded than it now is. This house stood, as it were, in a forest, and there was no approach to it for any wheeled carriage but by two long avenues cut through the woods. The dingle at the back of the house, behind the garden, was so thick and intertangled, that it was hard to penetrate it, excepting by a few narrow tracks worn by the country people; and this wilderness extended all up the heights, and over a great part of the table-land above, excepting where here and there a few cottages were scattered up and down; but these were far away one from the other, near the brook-side, in what we call the upper dell; and where it winds the farthest from the view of those persons passing to and fro from any place of the accustomed resort of the country people, was an unbowered spot, shaded on one side by a rock and on another by an exceeding thick copse, which was an old and well-known resort of a horde of gipsies, who came there at certain seasons of the year: and, because they made it a point of gipsy honour never to pilfer those

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who harboured them, or to fill their kettles from the poultry-yard of the neighbouring farmhouses, they had been left to enjoy their retreat for a length of years in undisturbed security.

"At length, however, it occurred to my father's mind, who, being a young man, had not yet learned to bear the honours of his justiceship with ease and convenience to himself, instead of endeavouring to win over these poor people to a better life by that kindness which every Christian owes to a fellow-creature, however degraded, that he would prosecute them to the utmost extent of the law. Hence he succeeded in driving them out from the country, at least so far that they never again appeared openly in the neighbourhood, and never more were seen offering to sell horn-spoons, to mend rush-bottomed chairs, or to tell fortunes at the doors of our cottages and farmhouses. Still, however, a suspicion ran in the country that these vagrants, though unseen, were not far off; as the old wives complained of many losses in their poultry-yards, and my father lost in one night a goose and gander, with a dozen or more of goslings. He had also very bad luck with his flocks, and lost a fine milch cow, which he attributed to the ban of an old gipsy woman, who had expressed a particular resentment at the clan being ejected from their ancient haunt, where she herself had first seen the day under the shadow of the rock above described, and where, as she said, she had spent 'mony o' her bonniest years whan she was a bairn.'

"The war with the gipsies had commenced some time before my birth; and whether the clan had conveyed themselves clean away, or were cowed into submission by the terrors of the law, my father knew not; but all alarms from that quarter ceased soon after my birth, and were not renewed till I had attained my fourth year, at which period, in the summer season, a girl going up the glen to seek a pyet which had strayed from its wicker cage hanging at her mother's door, was alarmed by seeing half a dozen of the old gang sitting under the rock. She described herself as having first espied them as she stood on a point of the higher grounds which jutted over the brook, and so near the cascade that she was sprinkled with the spray as she stood fixed with amazement to the spot. They had made a kind of tent by spreading a ragged cloak from the edge of the rock to

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the boughs of an old oak which was near at hand, having made a fire on the greensward near to the brook, over which hung their kettle hissing and boiling, as she said, louder and fiercer than the foam of the waterfall, leaving no doubt in her mind that her mother's pyet made one ingredient of the broth; a part of her story, however, which was cruelly marred some days after it had been told through the whole parish, from house to house, and in the church-porch besides, both before and after service, by the return of Maggy of her own free will and pleasure.

"As soon as the news of the arrival of the gipsies was known, my father and several others of the country justices had a meeting, and certain harsh measures were determined upon; but, inasmuch as certain forms were to be attended to before the vagrants could be seized, and as the county election was then going forward, more than a fortnight ensued between the justices' meeting and the event which I am about to relate.

"All these things of which I have spoken," said my grandfather, "happened before I had any recollection. I received the account of them from my father's own mouth, who used to say of himself, that when he first entered into a situation of authority, he was a very Rehoboam, and thought himself wiser than Solomon.

"While affairs stood in this way as it regarded the gipsies, my father and mother went to the county town, to a ball given by the members, leaving me a little round-faced, ruddy cherub of a boy, in my fourth year. I remember nothing of what happened then or afterward for some time, though some indistinct visions of that period have since presented themselves to me, but I could never reduce any of these images to any thing like order.

"It seems that I had, at that time, a little maid, called Susan, an orphan, who had been reared by my mother's housekeeper; a pretty young girl, but, as Mrs. Jellicorse, the housekeeper, used to say, not overgifted. This little maid used to take me out walking: and it seems that one evening, as usual, after I had taken my bread and milk with Mrs. Jellicorse, in her room, my little maid put on my implumed cap, and carried me into the shrubbery. The old gardener saw her there with me by her side, and cautioned her not to go far, for it threatened a storm; he also made me give him a

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kiss for a double cherry. He described me as looking like a fresh-blown rose, being dressed in a white frock with laced robings, having a purple scarf or sash laid down with a white border, as he described it, and blue shoes with gold clasps; moreover, that in my hand I had a little basket containing a few small blue pebbles, which I called beans, and that I asked him if they would grow in the ground and bring other beans, if they were to be sowed.

"The poor old man, to the very day of his death, could never help crying when he told the story; and, indeed, it was very certain, that after that sad evening he was never the same man.

"Susan and I were afterward seen by a ploughboy, who was going home from his work. She was standing by a stile in the hedge which separated an orchard at the back of my father's garden from the woods; and she had set me at the top of the stile, and stood by me. He looked back, as he said, once or twice, before he turned the corner of the path he was going along, and still saw her there as he had left her.

"From that time little Susan was never more heard of; she never came back to tell her tale: and my parents returned home, only to lament the loss of the darling of their heart and the delight of their eyes.

"It seems, that it was not till three hours after the ploughboy had seen Susan at the stile, that Mrs. Jellicorse, who had been very busy all day in making currant-rob, bethought herself of going up into the nursery, to see me tucked up in bed. But my little cradle was empty, though it was near ten o'clock, and no Susan in the room. Mrs. Jellicorse ran down again quicker than she had come up. The alarm was given, every servant put in motion, and a general search set on foot; but all in vain; we were nowhere to be found. All that long night persons were searching through the woods with lights. The terror spread from house to house. The cottagers were all roused; the village itself was up; the haunt of the gipsies repeatedly examined; but neither nurse, nor child, nor gipsy was to be found: and by morning light nothing remained to be done but to send an express to my parents."

"But here," said my grandfather, brushing away a tear, "I must be spared the pain of enlarging on my parents' agonies. They are now past; but it is a sub-

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ject on which I cannot expatiate: so let that matter be dropped. They never could speak of them themselves; though my mother often used to say, 'George, my love, it was good for your father and me to be afflicted: yet it was a grievous trial; it was worse than death.'"

My grandfather made a pause in this place, and my mother wiped her eyes. At length, we, the young party, spoke, and said, "Go on, dear grandpapa. Did the gipsies steal you?"

The old gentleman coughed, cleared his throat, took a glass of wine which my father presented him, and thus proceeded:—

"Hitherto," he said, "I have only repeated to you, my children, what I have heard from others. Now for my own recollections.

"The first thing which I can clearly remember is finding myself seated under a little cluster of trees, in the centre of a wide and barren heath, where was little grass, and only some thorny shrubs. To the north was a range of dark-blue hills; and near me were a dozen or more ragged men and women, among whom I particularly remember an old woman, at whose side I was placed. This old woman had a baby on her lap. I remember this scene, perhaps, because we were enjoying something very nice which had been boiled or stewed in a great iron pot; and I had a bone given me, out of which I sucked marrow.

"Again, I recollect another scene, which I suppose must have taken place on the same heath. We were all in a hut or house made of clay, and we were plucking a goose. I again remember the baby in this place, and the old woman: for I was made to hold the baby, while she performed some part in the cookery. This place was, I am sure, somewhere in the north, and, probably, one of those wild heaths which border on Scotland, and the hills we saw at a distance were, doubtless, the Cheviot Hills.

"After these more distinct remembrances, a variety of confused images are in my mind, strangely blended with infant conceits and baby hopes and fears, midnight meals, kettles boiling over fires which gleamed amid forest scenery and over wide-spread heaths, whistling winds, rocking woods, stealthy marches, pattering rains, scenes of fortune-telling, and beggary, with occasions of violence and altercation among ourselves, not

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unfrequently ending in bloody noses and black eyes, but, as I can recollect, having no further or more fatal results.

"At length, my remembrances became more distinct; yet not such as to enable me to give any clear account of our various perambulations, though I have a passably correct idea of our modes of life.

"It seems that our party were all connected by ties of relationship. There were an old man and his wife, who were the heads of the family; and the old wife, from what I can recollect of her, was the bandog, or Cerberus of the party, a very gorgon when excited, and more terrible in my eyes than Medusa herself.

"The old man had a sister as wrinkled and weather-beaten as himself; though, from what I remember of her, she had the remains of a noble and even beautiful person. That she was a thief, a liar, and fortune-teller, I well know; but there were a kindness and generosity in her character which have rendered her memory ever dear to me.

"This last old woman, whom I was accustomed to call mammy, had had many children, and some grandchildren, of whom two only remained; one son, a stripling, whom we called Lang Tam, and one grandchild, an orphan, the baby of whom I have so often spoken, my own-beloved little Alice."

There was an interchange of looks among the elders of the family, as my grandfather uttered these words, but no interruption of the narrative.

"Alice," continued my grandfather, "was, when I can first remember her, a little baby, having nothing remarkable in her appearance but a pair of black eyes. Being three years younger than myself, I was employed in watching her and lugging her about whenever our mammy was engaged; at other times, she either travelled on her grandmother's back or hips, or sat upon her knee, while I generally kept close by her side. For I had soon learned to know the only quarter from whence kindness was to be expected, for the kindness of my old mammy to me was never varied: she fed me with the best morsels from the caldron, fought all my battles, and would, I verily believe, have encountered a lion in my defence.

"Such were the principal persons of our party; and

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the rest was composed of sons and grandsons of the old man, with their wives and little ones; daughters and granddaughters, with their husbands and children; a tribe of whom I can say as little good as was reported of the Hittites and Jebusites, the Perizzites and the Hivites of old.

"But where shall I find, in a few words, a finer description of our horde than that which may be taken from Job? *They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter; they pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor; they cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry. For want and famine they were solitary, fleeing into the wilderness: who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper-roots for their meat. They were driven forth from among men (they cried after them as after a thief), to dwell in the cliffs of the valleys and the rocks.* Job xxiv. 8–10; xxx. 3–6.

"I had been about three years among these wild men, as afterward appeared, when, as far as I can suppose, they began to move southward. Alice and I travelled, as usual, on old Jack, our mammy's cuddy, the little one riding astride before me, and our mammy leading us.

"At length we stopped near some town, Lang Tam being taken ill, or having met with some woful accident; and the rest of the party going forward, there we found shelter in a barn, and Lang Tam was laid on straw. I know not what was the matter with him, but he had some wounds or sores about him; for his mother used to send us out to gather mallows, which she bruised and put to the wounds. I remember at this time also that she sent us out to beg, while she sat praying, or rather exorcising, near her son; and we seldom returned without some broken victuals or a few pence.

"Fancy your grandfather, my young ones," said the old gentleman, "a little sun-burnt, auburn-headed boy, hardly covered with rags, without shoes or stockings, leading a little plump black-eyed girl, scarcely half his own age, from street to street of some little village, I know not where, whining and crying from door to door, and telling stories, not one word of which was true, excepting that we were really in want and in distress. 'Please, ma'am, please, gude sir, please little master, a

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wee bit o' bread for twa pure bairns. Mammy is dead, and daddy's dead, and n'ane but granny left.'

"'And who are you? where do you come from?' was the general reply.

"I had my answer ready at all times, and Aly her tear; and we got many a meal and many a dish of broken meat from those kind hearts who could not unmoved behold an infant's tear.

"At length, the farmer in whose barn we lay took pity on us, and supplied the sick man with all he wanted. But, as our mammy said, 'her laddie had gotten his death thraw; nae power on earth could save him now; and she was thus deprived o' her last earthly hope: for what support,' said she, 'cud she expec fra the lassie Alice?'

"I have a sad, a deeply gloomy recollection of the dying hours of poor Tam. It was a dark night when he was taken with the agonies of death. His mother sat on the straw beside him. There was no light but from the moon, which shone in upon the dying man through a large gap in the roof. Alice had fallen asleep; but I was old enough to partake in my mammy's trouble, and I tried to comfort her, and said I would grow up, and be her son, and take care of her in her old age.

"'Will ye, my bonnie bairn?' she said, for she was a north country woman: 'n'a, ne'er heed me, a pure gipsy woman, wha has been bred up in an owr wild way, e'er to live wi' credit in this world. Let thy love, my bairn, be given to my wee Alice. Wilt thou promise ne'er to forsake pure Aly?'

"I cried, and put my arm round her neck, and vowed everlasting affection to the dear baby; and then the old woman added, 'Thou hast a charm about thy neck; mind weel that thou ne'er partest wi' it: thou hast worn it for a lang, lang time, langer than ye can weel mind. Hae ye it fast?'

"I answered that I had it, and at the same time directed her hand to feel that it was safe round my neck.

"This charm was no other than a kind of bag or little bundle, about the size of a pincushion, covered with greasy leather, and fastened with a coarse steel chain, which I had worn as long as I could remember, and had been made to suppose to be a charm on which my future success in life entirely depended. I had often asked what the bag contained, but had always been cut off

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with a solemn charge never to meddle wi' things o' sic high consequence.

"Towards midnight, the agonies of poor Tam became more violent; and he asked his mother, in broken accents, whar his soul wud gang when it left his body.

"'To God, my son,' she replied.

"'What!' said he, 'maun I gang afore the Judge wi' a' my ill-doings on me?'

"I know not what answer she made; but I have often thought of the question since, and considered what a dying man must feel who has no Saviour on whom to call in the hour of need.

"Towards daydawn, the poor boy died; and I remember well watching the corpse, which the mother had already streaked (to use her well-remembered word), as the light gradually developed the dreadful change so soon effected by the chill hand of death.

"That very night, poor Tam was committed to the dust at the expense of the parish, and immediately after the funeral we set forward by moonlight; and travelling due south (for we had our back on the pole-star, for which our mammy had some odd name, which I cannot recollect), we came to a halt about five miles from our last residence, and lay the rest of the night under a tree.

"After the memorable event of the death of poor Tam, my recollection again became confused; for we were moving onward with our mammy, making out our living by begging, fortune-telling, and pilfering, and my young head became puzzled by the many changes of scenes and places to which I was exposed.

"At length, our mammy, either selling her cuddy or putting it into some place of security, I know not which, took Aly in her arms, and performed two short days' journey; at the end of which we came to a thick wood, through which we passed, choosing, as usual, the most obscure pathways, and arrived towards dusk at a little greensward resembling a fairy-ring, fast-by a brawling brook and waterfall, where, under the shade of a rock, our mammy set Alice down, and began to set out our supper from a wallet she carried on her back. 'Ye'll love Aly, dearie, wunna ye, my laddie?' she said to me; 'ye'll aye love her, wunna ye, my bonny bairn?' and at the same time she dashed away a tear from her eye as if ashamed of having betrayed this token of tenderness.

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"Well do I remember that tear, and I thank God it was not shed in vain. I recollect no more of what she said; for our supper was ready, and when we had taken it we settled ourselves to rest on the moss under the rock. The rushing water sang our lullaby.

"It might perhaps be about midnight when I awoke again. The moon which had shone on the mortal remains of Lang Tam had waned and waxed again, and its silver light, passing through the trembling boughs of our leafy canopy, danced fantastically on our green bed. I opened my eyes, looked around me, and saw that my mammy had risen and laid her cloak over us. She had not, however, left us, but sat on the ground, leaning her head upon her knees. I looked at her for a while, and slept again.

"In the morning, our mammy gave us our breakfast; and, bidding us bide whar we war, left us to buy victuals, as she said, saying she wud sune be back agan.

"We had been used to be left alone, and had our own pleasures. We gathered sedges from the brook, and I made baskets of them, while Alice sat by, encouraging me with many an exclamation of infant wonder. Alice was a pretty little creature then: her complexion was a clear bright brown, her hair black as a raven, and her bright dark eyes of a softness and gentle lustre which I have heard say were seldom equalled. The few rags she wore scarcely covered her dimpled shoulders, and her tattered petticoat left one leg bare to the knee.

"Our mammy returned about two o'clock, as well as I can remember. She gave us our dinner of that which she had brought with her: and then, taking Alice to the brook, she washed her from head to foot, arranging her raven ringlets with a new comb with which she had provided herself, putting on her rags again. She then did the same by me, and seeing the charm safe on my neck, she bade us cum wi' her.

"I asked her whither she was taking us, for the ceremony of washing had excited some sort of undefined expectations in my mind.

"'Ye need na spear ony questions,' was her reply: 'only mind ye this muckle—that it never was to me ye owed ony evil; it was na me that took the young eagle frae his nest, or that had ony hand in't. I ken owr weel what a mither feels when robbed o' her wee

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anes. But I hae shown you naething if it binna kindness sin' ye can mind ony thing ava; and ye canna but say sae.'

"I made no answer to all this, for I did not then understand it; but I lifted up my arms to embrace her, and as she stooped to kiss me I felt her tears on my cheek.

"She had Aly in her arms, and she walked on through the woods, brushing away the lower branches of the trees which impeded her progress. At length, she stopped at a little gate, from whence extended a winding path trimmed on each side with a considerable attention to neatness. 'Ye maun needs gang alang that path, my laddie,' she said, 'and tak Aly by the hand; and, after a while, ye will come to a house, and sine ye will see a leddy; and ye maun tell her that ye are pure fatherless bairns; and gin she wunna tak notice o' you, tak the charm frae your neck, and bid her open it. But mind, my laddie, dinna forget Aly, bonnie wee Aly, your ain fair Aly; and tak nae kindness o' whilk she is nae to hae her ain share.'

"I promised all she could desire, and probably in the way she most wished, for she kissed me tenderly. 'But, mammy, sha'na' we see you at that house?'

"'Ay,' said she, 'as sure as I stand here, I will do my best to see ye agan.'

"'And sune?' I said.

"'Gae alang wi' ye,' she said, 'haud Aly by the hand, and mind ye dinna let her gang awa.'

"I promised to observe her directions; and she lifted us over the gate, kissing us by turns ere she set us down, and saying, 'Mak haste, or I'll be round at the house afore ye; and mind, if the warst come to the warst, ye maun show the leddy the charm, and bid her open it.'

"So saying, she turned away; and we commenced our progress towards this house, where we were to see the lady.

"It was about four o'clock one day in the month of July, when little Alice and I were left together in the wood. How little then did I suspect my real situation, or conceive of the true kindness which my gipsy friend had intended me!"

"Why, grandpapa," said my little sister, "I do think

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that you had then got home, though you did not know it."

"Well, well, we shall presently see," replied my grandfather.

"But I hope," said my eldest brother, "that you did not forsake little Aly with her ragged petticoat."

"In that case, you would not own me for a grandfather, would you, Charles?" replied the old gentleman. "Is it so? Well, we shall see that too; so no more interruptions.

"Little Aly had a most innocent way of wondering," continued my grandfather; "but, though a gipsy born and bred, the tenderer feelings of her nature had been called out, not only by her grandmother, but by me, for whom she had conceived a most deep affection. And though, to be certain, I had not gained much politeness among the gipsies, yet, whether from very early management, or from something inherent, I was by no means the hardened little animal which I might be supposed to be. But to cease from these compliments, although the object of them is of no mean consequence in my eyes.

"When advanced some little way in the wood, we suddenly came upon an opening, where, looking down into a deep dell, I saw a brook twinkling through the shades, and over this brook a bridge of a peculiar construction. At the sight of this bridge I started, and felt like one in a dream. I fancied that I had seen the place before. I looked at Aly in my surprise, but her innocent little features expressed nothing.

"'Div ye see yon bridge, Aly?' I said.

"'Ay, brother,' she answered; 'and luke at thae bonnie red berries in the trees.'

"An ash-tree, full of berries, hung over the bridge. It seemed that the figure of the tree was familiar to me; and I had an idea of a lady standing under that tree on some former occasion, and giving me clusters of these berries. The vision, however, was indistinct; and I became still more confused, and rubbed my eyes.

"We looked a while at the bridge and the tree, and then passed on hand-in-hand, like the babes in the wood

'For well you must know,
That a long time ago,
There were two little children, whose names I don't know,

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Who were stolen away,
On a fine summer's day,
And left in a wood, as old story doth say.

The green boughs met over our head, and formed a long arched passage before us, beyond which the scene appeared to open, for the light beamed strong in the distance.

"'Aly,' I said, 'luke there.'

"She raised her gentle eyes to me, but did not speak.

"We went on, and came out upon a kind of terrace, where a thousand objects burst upon my view, forcing on my mind a crowd of ideas of which I could make no meaning.

"We were on the edge of a deep valley, in the bottom of which the spring, whose course we had been following during the whole of our walk, had spread itself into a small lake; while on the opposite side the banks arose boldly and abruptly, to such a height that their summits, in my young fancy, met the clouds, being covered with woods, and intersected with valleys and hollows, which, receding from the eye, presented such cool retreats as the fairies, of whom I had heard much from my mamma, might be supposed to choose for their summer haunts. I was then too young to understand the beauties of this glorious scene; but I was strangely puzzled at the fancies which thickened in my brain as I looked upon it. At length I spoke, and said, 'Aly, and I hae seen that leddy, in this place too!'

"'What leddy?' she asked.

"'The leddy wha gae me thae red berries.'

"'Will she come again?' said the little one.

"'I dinna ken,' I replied; and then (for I was seven years of age) began to reason with myself, and try to account, in a childish way indeed, for all the thick-coming and perplexing fancies which crowded upon me.

"While thus meditating, or rather bewildering myself, we walked on, and came to a small green gate, which we found half-open; and passing forward, we entered a long walk of filbert-trees, neatly trimmed and gravelled, and closely hedged on each side. We proceeded a great way, at least the way appeared long to me, till at length arriving at an opening to the left, we saw a white horse feeding in a field, obtaining the view of him in a place where there was a break in the row of filberts.

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"The horse had his back to us when I first espied him, and it immediately occurred to me, that, if I could see his forehead, I should find that he had something peculiar about his brow. With this view I called to him. He started at the voice, and, turning round, I saw, with astonishment, a very remarkable black spot which encircled one eye, and gave the animal an appalling appearance in the apprehension of a little child. Aly and I were both startled, but from different causes, when the horse turned towards us, and in so doing, advanced his head in the direction in which we stood; and Aly, screaming, pulled me forward, while I said, 'How odd! I ken'd he had a black spot on his face! This is a strange place.'

"My young companion, then only four years old, could not enter into my feelings at this time; they were far too refined and abstruse for my little gipsy sister, and indeed such as I could make little of myself. But we were to go on as far as the gravel walk would take us till we should find a house; and whatever other bad habits we might have acquired, disobedience to our dear mammy was not one of them.

"Soon after we had left the place where we had seen the horse, the gravel walk took a sudden turn, and we pursued our way, till a root-house, opening its hospitable mouth wide before us, invited us in; and the temptation being strong, we turned in, though a little out of the gravel walk, and looked round with admiration on the various grotesque settees and arm-chairs, formed of roots of trees, fixed round the root-house. 'Nice! nice!' said little Aly, to whose gipsy taste this root-house probably had peculiar charms.

"But though I heard her exclamation, I was by far too much astonished to answer her. It seemed to my bewildered fancy that every chair and couch was filled with imaginary figures, all well known and familiar to my fancy: an old man in a wig, a lady,—a pretty lady,—a pleasant gentleman, a thin, spare, elderly spinster, and a rosy young servant-maid, all appeared in a kind of vision to me in this place; all seated with the exception of the servant, on some one or other of the rustic seats, and all, as I fancied, looking kindly at me. I rubbed my eyes again, and thought that it must have been in a dream that I had seen all this.

"The hut was laid with pretty coloured pebbles, which

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had attracted the eyes of Aly. She had sat down, and was gathering some of the gayest in her apron. 'Bonnie! bonnie!' she said, as she picked out one and another, and called me to look at some which had particularly attracted her attention. These were of a dark blue, round and polished, and having a ridge of white on one side.

"'O, Aly!' I exclaimed, as soon as I saw them, 'I used to ca' them beans!' And then the idea entered my head, 'When did I think they were beans? I have not seen such stones for a lang time, but I am sure I used to ca' them beans; could I ever have been in that place afore?' and my little brain was perfectly bewildered again.

"When Aly had gathered as many of these beans as she thought proper, we left the root house, and continued our progress, till, being puzzled by the gravel walk branching out in two places, we chose the left, and found ourselves in a very neat kitchen-garden, where the gravel walk suddenly breaking off, we beheld extended before us a long straight path planted with chamomile, at the end of which was an arbour of lattice work shaded by an ash-tree, the work in front of the arbour representing a pointed arch surmounted by a cross. 'There's lavender by that bower,' I said, 'and bunches of keys, Aly; I think so. Come and see.'

"We went trotting with our bare feet over the chamomile; and there indeed, near the arbour, was a bed of lavender, but the keys were not to be found. The long pods, however, which hung in clusters from the ash-tree, attracted my attention, and I said, 'O, Aly, thae things are the keys; I used to say they were keys:' and I gathered some to give her.

"'But when did I call them keys?' was the next idea; 'and when did I see this arbour? and why did I think of lavender when I saw this arbour? Did I ever come here when I was a wee laddie? Did mammy bring me here?' and I gave up the mystery as inexplicable, though I do not suppose that either of these words at that time presented themselves to my mind.

"While standing in the arbour, which was in an elevated situation, we looked across the garden, and discerned the slated roof of a house. I instantly understood that this must be the house whither we had been directed to bend our steps; so, taking the gentle Aly's hand, I led her back over the chamomile, retraced that

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part of the gravel walk which led to the part where it branched off, and then pursuing the other direction, soon came in view of a handsome white house, having many windows, and on the ground-floor a parlour opening with folding-doors into the garden.

"At the sight of the house, I was forcibly seized with a recurrence of my gipsy habits, and I began to consider what story I was to tell the inhabitants of the mansion in order to excite their interest.

"With this view, I endeavoured to throw an air of suffering into my face, and told Aly that, while I begged, she was to whine and greet.

"While thus setting ourselves in order to act our parts, a sweet voice, accompanied by the notes of a guitar, reached our ears from the open folding-doors; and I heard these words distinctly, being part of an ancient ballad—

'The mother wept her baby dear,
And mourn'd his wretched doom,
And envied her whose infant fair
Sleeps sweetly in the tomb.'

"The verse being finished, the voice ceased, and then recommenced; on which we crept forward, and stood where we could see the whole apartment. It was such a room as exceeded in magnificence any thing I had seen for some years. There were crimson curtains, and pictures in gilt frames, and fine wainscotings and carvings; and, what attracted me more than all, a pretty pale lady, sitting on a sofa, all alone, playing on a guitar, and singing in such sweet tones as I thought I had never heard before. She had tears in her eyes, and they perhaps dimmed her sight; for although we stood before her, she did not seem to see us: and thus it often happens, I have since thought, that sorrow blinds our eyes, and prevents us from seizing the consolations held forth to us by a merciful Providence. At length, however, I broke in upon her song by beginning to use the means which I had been taught for touching the hearts of those of whom I hoped to obtain charity, being followed by little Aly, who whined in one key, while I moaned and pleaded in another.—'Please, gude leddy, please to grant your charity: twa wee orphans, no tasted a bit o' bread the day: mammy dead, daddy dead, travelled a lang, lang way, naebody to tak care o' us, cauld nights, rain, nae claeths to cover us.'

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"Such was the burden of our tale; and perhaps no romance writer of the sixteenth century ever heaped wonder upon wonder, and misery upon misery, more prodigally than I did: for, my dear grandchildren, you may have already perceived, that though only seven years old, my intellects were not in a state of inaction.

"The pretty lady looked up when she heard our voices, started, laid down her guitar, and seemed in the act of flying from the room, as if unable to bear the sight of children, when, before she could effect her escape, a large spaniel came out of the hall-door, prepared to bark most furiously: when, having uttered one or two preparatory growls, he suddenly changed his tone, came bounding forward, overturned little Aly in his course, and almost did the same by me, though evidently with the most friendly intentions; for he seemed hardly to know how to express his joy, which he demonstrated by such gambols, that my poor little Aly, who lay sprawling on the gravel, perfectly shrieked with terror.

"It was impossible for the pretty lady to hear the cries of the poor gipsy baby without being moved. She turned hastily, and was the first to lift her up, when it was found that her hands and arms had been so grazed by the sharp gravel that they were streaming with blood. Her bare knee, unprotected by her ragged petticoat, was also covered with blood, which trickled in various streams down to her foot. She had ceased to cry; for an old white-headed gardener, who had suddenly appeared from behind some thicket, had called away the great dog, and stood on the nearest corner of the grass-plot, patting him, and looking eagerly at me. A number of female servants, headed by a respectable matron, appeared at the same time coming out from the hall-door, and uttering such exclamations as commonly proceed from the mouths of waiting-gentlewomen when under alarm.

"In the mean time, the lady had raised the little girl, and was looking with terror on her crimsoned limbs, calling on the housekeeper to hasten to the child's help, and praying that the little creature might not be seriously injured, her tears at the same time pouring fast from her eyes, while I, in extreme alarm, had severely increased the pain of my beloved Aly, by trying to wipe away the blood from her arm with a corner of my coarse jacket.

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"A shriek from Aly, and a loud exclamation from the females present, made me desist: on which I burst into tears, clasped my arms round my little sister, and sitting down on the ground, drew her upon my lap; in which attitude we literally (not poetically) mingled our tears, for Aly nestled her little face against mine, and sobbed aloud.

"It seems that the pretty lady could not bear this, but ran back into the parlour, where, leaning her head against the window-frame, her agony was audible, and she exclaimed, in great agitation, 'Bring some ointment: bind up those dimpled limbs; the very sight of them, bleeding as they are, wrings and tortures my heart. Oh those dimpled hands! that baby foot! that innocent eye! those gentle tears!'

"'Be easy, madam, be easy,' said the housekeeper, who had despatched her maidens for linen and ointment, 'the child is not materially hurt. Lie still, my little one, and let me pick out the pebbles; and don't you shake and tremble so: it is your brother who holds you: we won't hurt you. The naughty dog is gone; and I will see if I can't find some sugared bread and butter by-and-by.'

"The maids had now returned with the ointment, and the housekeeper began her operations with as much tenderness as she would have used to her master's child.

"'Ask them who they are,' said the lady, in a tone of interest.

"'And who are you, my little man?' said the housekeeper. 'How came you here?'

"I had a ready tale to tell about mammy and daddy being dead, and granny only left, and granny gane awa, and naebody to tak care o' Aly and me, and sleepin' in woods, and gatherin' berries to eat.

"'A strange story,' said the housekeeper, looking hard at me, 'and not likely in this Christian country. Are you telling the truth, little boy?'

"While she thus spoke, the old gardener had drawn near, and was bending his ear in deep attention.

"'Have you no parish?' said the housekeeper.

"I hardly understood the question, and made no answer.

"'Ask them when their parents died,' said the lady,

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who eyed us very attentively, and seemed deeply interested in what was passing.

"'Do you remember your daddy and mammy, my boy?'

"'Daddy die on the straw,' replied Alice, for I had whispered to her to speak, knowing what answer she would make, as she had always been used to call Lang Tam by that title.

"'And you saw him die?' said the old gardener.

"'Mammy put him in a pit,' she answered.

"'Then you remember your mammy?' said the gardener.

"'Oh, yes; mammy will come by-and-by,' she answered.

"'Why, this little lad here said she had died long ago!'

"'She ca's her granny mammy,' I answered.

"'Well, that may be,' replied the gardener: 'but I reckon, as is the custom with many of your tribe, that you can tell lies, my young gentleman.'

"'Don't speak harshly to him, Robert,' said the housekeeper: 'at any rate, such poor wandering babes are to be pitied. And look you here, Robert, there is a pebble got into the skin, and I can't see to pick it out.'

"'Let me try my hand,' replied the gardener; and while thus engaged, the housekeeper endeavoured to divert the child's attention. And for this purpose, seeing her apron tied up in a corner, she said, 'And what have you got here, little one?—bits of bread?'

"'Beans, ma'am—bonnie blue beans!' replied Aly, with alacrity, lifting up her head; 'nice blue beans!'

"'Will you show them to me?' said the good-natured housekeeper.

"Aly untied the corner of her apron, and showed the pebbles.

"'Beans!' exclaimed the housekeeper; 'why, they are pebbles!'

"'Blue pebbles,' cried the old gardener. 'And who told you that they were beans? Speak, child, speak!'

"'It was me, it was me,' I cried: 'dinna be angry; I used to ca' such stanes beans, and I told Aly they were beans.'

"'And who taught you to call them beans?' exclaimed the old man, looking quite wild.

"'O, dinna be angry, dinna be angry,' I replied; and

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I held Aly closer to me, and we both renewed our scarcely dried-up tears.

"The lady then coming forward said, 'Don't frighten him; let him speak. Tell me, dear little boy, who taught you to call those pebbles beans? O, do speak!' she added.

"'Naebody, leddy,' I said, 'naebody; I used to do it.'

"'Used to do it! when? O, when?'

"A gentleman at that moment appeared, coming along the walk, and inquired what we were all about, and whom his lady had got there? But no one took any notice of his questions, for they were too busy with me.

"'Dear little boy,' said the lady, 'tell us who you are: don't tell any untruths; we will be kind to you; we will not do you any harm; do speak!'

"'But you'll tak' Aly awa',' I said.

"'No, never, never; we will never take Aly away. Here, here,' she said, 'here is money,—one, two, three, four, five shillings: only say who you are. Do you remember your mother, your father, the place where you were born?'

"'No,' I said; 'but dinna part me frae Aly gin I tell the truth.'

"'We will not, we will not, never, never,' said the lady: and, turning to the gentleman, 'Oh, my love,' she said, 'help me to examine this boy, for I am unable to control my feelings.'

"'You frighten him,' replied the gentleman, who seemed little less agitated than his wife. 'My little man, do tell us who you are.'

"'I dinna ken,' I said, gathering alarm from the agitation I read in every face: 'but you winna tak' Aly away gin I tell the truth; you winna put me in jail?'

"'No,' replied the gentleman; 'I will never take the baby from you; and I will give you a golden guinea, to buy you a new coat, if you will tell me the truth.'

"'And ye winna hurt mammy?'

"'No, no,' said the gentleman.

"'For she taud me to tell ye,' I added.

"'What did she tell you to say?'

"'That it wasna her that stole the young eagle frae his nest.'

"The lady shrieked aloud on hearing this, and threw herself on the sofa. This circumstance renewed my terror, and I augured every thing terrible from the agi-

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tation of every face. I sprang on my feet, and with a strength superior to my own, dragged Alice with me. The gentleman followed me, seized my arm, and spoke, but with such an excess of agitation that, my terror being still increased, I remembered the old gipsy's last exhortation, 'Gin the warst come to the warst, show the leddy the charm, and bid her open it.'

"'Now,' I thought, 'is the time for the use of my charm.' Instantly I set down Aly, who clung round my waist, and breaking the chain from my neck, 'There, sir, there,' I said; 'show this to the pretty leddy—but no, I'll gie it her mysel', gin ye'll promise no to hurt Aly.'

"'No, I never, never will,' said the gentleman. 'What is it you have to give me?'

"'I'll no gie it to you: mammy bade me gie it to the pretty leddy, and I'll do her bidding,' I said, sturdily.

"The lady had followed us; she was near to us; she extended her hand. I placed the little greasy bag in her white palm, and bade her open it, in full assurance that it would set all things right.

"There was a momentary delay from no one having a pair of scissors; but I produced a pocket-knife,—my greatest treasure. The bag was ripped open, and my golden clasps appeared, wrapped in a remnant of a linen shirt, on which was marked, at full length, the name of George Adolphus Willoughby—that name so loved, so long and deeply lamented.

"'My God! my God!' exclaimed the lady, looking towards heaven; 'did I not think it?' and as she spoke, the tokens fell from her hand, and she sunk insensible in the arms of her female servants.

"Yet she was little heeded by the gentleman, the housekeeper, and the gardener, who, gathering round me, quite overpowered me, not by their questions, but their close inspection. 'There should be a mole beneath the knee,' said one, stripping up my rags. 'And the ears having no awkward lobes, but rounded off,' said another. 'And on the back, between the shoulders, a strawberry-mark,' added a third. And I verily feared that, among them, I should be pulled to pieces. It was in vain for me to set myself in an attitude of defence.

"This extraordinary scene continued till full confirmation of my identity was admitted, and my father (for such was the gentleman), bursting into tears, acknow-

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ledged and proclaimed his son returned. 'My son! my lost one!' he said; 'behold your father, your mother, your home! Long, long have we wept for you; but this moment repays us for years of misery.'

"I had a quick conception for my years, and at once took in all that I was desired to understand. But, faithful to my affections, I withdrew myself in a manner which at the moment he might think cold, and falling on my knees before him, directing Aly to do the same, 'Then, if I'm your laddie, sir,' I said, 'will you mind your promise? will you never tak me awa frae my wee Aly? may we live thegither, and never, never gae awa frae ane anither? I canna gang awa frae Aly, puir wee Aly!' and, bursting into tears, I embraced her as we knelt together.

"My mother (for you will not doubt that the pretty lady was my mother), who had sunk only for a few seconds under the pressure of her feelings, appeared again at that moment; and while receiving a confirmation of her best hopes, that I was really her son, from her most affectionate husband, she clasped both Aly and myself in her arms, and gave me every assurance I could desire that she would henceforth consider the little Alice as her daughter.

"And who can describe the scene which followed when we returned to the house? How were my features examined and re-examined! what tears were shed! what exclamations of joy! what tumults among servants, tenants, and cottagers! what ringing of bells and tuning of fiddles! for my father set all the villagers to dance. What thanksgivings! what shouts of praise! what almsgivings! what a bustle among tailors and sempstresses! what visitings from aunts, cousins, and cousins' cousins! and all on account of the gipsy babies. For if I was the king of the revels, Aly was my chosen queen; and I was much better pleased at seeing her dressed in cambric and lace, than I was with my own new suits, however neatly fitted to set me off to the best advantage.

"Mrs. Jellicorse and old Robert, and, for that matter, the whole village, were trimmed off on the occasion; and, as I have heard my father say, it took one revolution of the sun before any one in the neighbourhood could descend into common life; or, as my mother used to say, before she could repeat her prayers without such

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bursts of tears as left her little power of saying any thing else than, 'Thank God, thank God, thank God for all his kindness!'—a sort of prayer which, after all, may perhaps be as acceptable to Him that loves a thankful heart, as any other that man can devise, and one which will probably be in the greatest request when faith and hope shall be swallowed up in glory.

"As months passed away, my parents had the satisfaction of finding that I was not irretrievably ruined by my gipsy life. My mother took unwearied pains in making me correct in speaking the truth, showing me the sin, folly, and shame of lying. With Aly she had little trouble; for she evidenced from infancy a disposition peculiarly amiable, and drank in greedily, through the Divine blessing, that spiritual nourishment which my dear mother imparted. I will not say how pretty she used to look, when, dressed like a little lady, she followed my mother about the house, or sat by her on the sofa employed with her needle.

"But I must not enter into these matters," continued my grandfather; "I am beginning to feel that I have held forth long enough. I am not going to give a long history of my life after I returned home. But one thing I must tell you—that, when I was about twelve years of age, and Aly nine, our ever-loved mammy appeared again, and that our parents were prepared to receive her with affection and gratitude. She was much broken down, and fairly confessed that she could never bring herself to give up her wandering habits till she felt those infirmities which rendered her unable to pursue them.

"My parents immediately provided a lodging for her in a cottage in the wood, compelled her to wear new and clean garments, and live what they called comfortably, but what she evidently did not quite relish: but, as she herself said, it was a hard matter to be tethered down, as she was, to lie under cover on a fine summer's night.

"She resided in this situation nearly two years; during which, Aly and my mother visited her almost daily, and surely did their best to prevent her dying in ignorance of her Saviour. Neither do I believe that their efforts for her soul's good were without effect; for a few minutes before her death, she was heard to utter these words: 'I'm gaen a lang journey, but I's set out wi' a gude heart, for I'll find a frien' at the end o' it; and that

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no through ony o' my ain gude deeds, for they are owr muckle like the rags i' the whilk my wee Aly showed herself afore the laird's door: but I dinna doubt that I'll find as gude acceptance as she did, though I canna plead the innocence under my rags as my wee ane was able to do.'

"I could speak of many happy years spent after this with my dear parents, both of whom I hope to meet in glory.

"And now, my beloved grandchildren, run and kiss your grandmother, and ask her to tell you how it happens that some of you little rogues have eyes and hair as black as a raven's plume."

END OF THE GIPSY BABES

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THE BASKET-MAKER.

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THE BASKET-MAKER.

If my reader is not disposed to descend into lowly life I would advise him not to read my little book, although I could promise him that I will not introduce him into any society which might give offence to his most refined and delicate feelings.

I am a basket-maker by trade, and my dwelling for many years past has been on the road between London and Hackney. When I first established myself there, my house, though built on a line with those on either side fronting the road, was so distinct from every other, that one must have called aloud indeed before one could have made a neighbour hear, even in the stillest hour of night; behind my house was all open field, and our little garden was never at that time deprived of the rays of the sun by the shadows of other houses; truly it was a pleasant spot then, and is well enough at this time; and I love it the more because it was there that I brought my dear Aly, only three days after our marriage, for I fetched her from the country as far off as Bulmarsh-heath in Berkshire; and it was there, too, where all my babies, to the number of seven, first saw the light, and from whence two passed in their tender infancy into the arms of their blessed Saviour; it was there, too, that my wife gently led me from a state of spiritual death into the light of everlasting life;—not that I should say that she did this in her own strength,—that would indeed be asserting too much even of the best of wives,—but that she was made the means, in the hands of a higher power; and blessed indeed are those who are thus employed! And truly she had a weary work with me for some years, for I had a mighty notion of my own wit and wisdom, and a very mean one of that of other people, especially of women in general; an opinion which I had got from observing too much of

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the vanity and levity of many young girls in the streets, and the houses of my acquaintance, being little inclined to look inwards, and see the follies of my own heart. Yet, to speak as the world would speak, I was never a bad husband; I never drank, or spent money on myself unnecessarily; I kept a regular account of my incomings and outgoings, and if I was not always as kind and tender to Aly as I ought to have been, considering how much she deserved of me, yet I loved her dearly, and that with an invariable constancy.

My house was small, having the shop and the kitchen on the ground-floor, and as many rooms on the first and second floor. When we had been in it about a year, an opportunity offered for us to take a respectable lodger, an old lady, who had known my wife from a babe; and it was then for the first time that we incurred a debt, and ran ourselves out as much as fifty pounds in buying furniture, and some other little expenses attending on the birth of our first-born, James, which happened near about that period. By dint of hard labour and much self-denial we brought the fifty down to forty in a few months; but for three years after that the debt fluctuated between thirty and forty, being sometimes down as low as thirty, and then up again to near forty; and we could only keep up our credit by shifting this debt from one shoulder to another, as it were, and by running up bills in one quarter while endeavouring to pay them off in another.

Trade at that time was rather at a stand-still, and, as I have often thought on reflecting on the subject, had we not happened to take the lady in when we did, we should never have been able to muster the money for our rent; but what she paid us assisted us greatly in this particular, and yet the great debt hung like a weight of iron on my heart, and often made me break out in murmurs against Providence, which impiety on my part always brought my wife to tears.

"Oh! Joseph, Joseph," she would say, "whatever you do, if you love me, if you love your children, utter not a word against your heavenly Father. Look round you; where can your eye rest but upon tokens of the Divine love? And then, my dear husband, if you consider these tokens, as they truly are, the earnest of those eternal, invisible, and all-glorious mercies which God the Son has procured by his death for those who

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are brought to love him; surely your complaints would be changed into songs of praise, and your tears be turned into smiles."

Sometimes, when she would argue thus with me, I was brute enough to answer roughly, and again I would be sullen, and take up my hat and walk out at the door; nevertheless, her words were not lost upon me, no, they sank deep into my heart; neither did they fail of their purpose, according to the beautiful words of the prophet, Isaiah lv. 10, 11: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

But perhaps you will wonder, my friends, how an humble basket-maker's wife could find words to express herself so truly and so beautifully on such deep matters as my Aly did, and especially could you but know what a plain, unpresuming, simple person she was; but He that was her teacher is a divine one, and who can set a limit to the power of such a teacher?

However, although my Aly thus continually encouraged me to look upward with hope, nay, with assurance, that all would be well with us and with our children in the end, yet the weight of our debt hung upon my spirits, and we were put to many shifts, and had to endure many privations. At these I used oftentimes to grumble, but I do not know that I ever recollect one word of complaint ever proceeding from the mouth of my dear wife; and she would often say to me, after we had dined on potatoes and a little slice of butter, "See, Joseph, how well our little ones look," for we had two by that time; "and think how many poor creatures, better than ourselves, have their whole living on worse food than this."

But I was unbelieving still. At length, I remember, we had had a hard winter, and on Easter-eve we were exceedingly short of money, yet I was very urgent with my wife to buy plums for a pudding the next day.

"We can do without a pudding, Joseph," she answered; "we shall have a bit of meat to mark the day let us wait for the pudding till another year."

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"And what for?" I asked; "have not I waited year after year for better times, and are we not just where we were?"

She got up as I spoke, taking up the babe who lay in her arms, and reaching the Bible from the shelf, pointed out these words to me, Psalm xxxvii. 7, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."

"It's what I can't do," I answered. She burst into tears on this, and her face dropped upon that of the babe, and she was quite agitated and convulsed, as it were, by her sobs.

Aly was not a woman who gave way to tears on all occasions; I was therefore the more moved at this, and said, "Why, what have I done or said to trouble you so? Come, cheer up—I did not mean to say any thing unkind."

"Nor did you," she answered, "as far as related to me, for you are as good a husband as woman ever had; but it seemed to me, when you said you could not wait upon God, that there was a death-blow to all my hopes. What prosperity, Joseph, I ask," she added, raising her head, and fixing her gentle yet sorrowful eyes fully upon me, "what prosperity can be looked for in that house where the master acknowledges that he cannot trust his God? Oh! Joseph, dear Joseph, I would rather have reason to believe that your heart was converted to your God than receive the forty pounds down on my hand, to pay the debts which hang so heavy on my heart."

I looked at her as if she had uttered some words in an unknown tongue: and in very deed her language was an unknown one to me; for although each word was intelligible, I could no more participate in or comprehend the sentiment she meant to convey, than a babe of a year old; however, I made no answer, but went out of the kitchen to shut up the shop, and then taking up my hat walked out of the house, taking my way towards the fields.

The moon was then quite young, and the air was soft and balmy; there were stars innumerable in the heavens; it was a glorious night: but there was a thorn in my breast,—I felt more than commonly sad, and yet I could not describe what sort of sorrow it was wherewith I was exercised.

Was it worldly sorrow, and the dread of the effects

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of my debts? or was it that Aly had at length prevailed (by the Divine blessing) to make me see that I was an ungrateful, unbelieving being, one who received the good things of this life without thankfulness, and was ready to quarrel with Providence when things did not turn out just to my wishes? At any rate, there was that evening a change working in my mind, my thoughts tumbling and tossing within me like a boiling ocean; I was angry with my God, angry with my wife, and more angry with myself, and from time to time I broke out in audible murmurs against the decrees and arrangements of Providence; for I could not understand God's dealings with man, and wickedly and arrogantly thought that if I were in the place of the Supreme Being, and possessed of his power, I would order things very differently;—fool that I was, that I could not understand even that which may be known of him by his works and word; for, as I was afterward assisted to see, he ever is taking those measures with the human race which will in the end produce the most mighty sum of human felicity; and although he sometimes seems to cause grief, yet it is upon the same principle on which a father allows his rebellious boy to dip his fingers into a burning candle, in order that he may learn to dread the power of the consuming element on another occasion. Thus are we permitted to suffer evil, and to know our own weakness and depravity by sad and painful experience, in order that we may learn to choose the good and eschew the evil; and when fully convinced, by the Divine blessing, of our own insufficiency, he unites us with himself, and makes our case as sure and fast for ever as his own throne of glory.

But all this had hitherto been dark and incomprehensible to me, although my wife had endeavoured to state it to me times without number; nevertheless her labours were not to be lost, through the Divine mercy towards my unworthy self; and, as I said before, I felt that night, as I paced up and down the fields at the back of my house, such a stirring within me, as if all the thoughts, evil or otherwise, which had ever crossed my mind, were rising in opposition against each other. One moment I was for going to the ale-house, and drowning my troubles in liquor; then I was for making a merit to myself with my God on church-going and strictness of life; then I was for giving up my house, selling my

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furniture, and enlisting as a soldier; then would I go home, and ask my wife to pray for me; any thing, in short, but consenting to throw myself unconditionally and in my own person on Christ, my Lord and brother; and thus my mind worked, till at length a thing happened to me which had not happened for years before,—I burst into a violent flood of tears, and quite sobbed again, and the feeling which followed was the sweetest I ever remember; I can only describe it by saying that I can fancy it was something like that which inspired these words in the prodigal son:—"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son,"—accordingly, being inspired by this warm and tender feeling, I hastened home, and letting myself into the shop by the pass-key, I heard my wife's voice as she sat on the rocking-chair by the kitchen-fire lulling our little Aly to sleep; she was singing a hymn; her tones were sad; yet I thought I had never heard sweeter in my life, and the words were—

"Oh! God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home."

I stood awhile in the shop, and it being dark where I was, I saw her distinctly as the light flickered from the fire on her gentle face. I then stepped silently into the kitchen,—for I felt like one full of shame for former offences, and yet hardly knowing how to express myself,—and sitting down opposite to her, I said, "Aly, dear, you are right, we will not have the pudding to-morrow, and I can't say but I am sorry that I said those words which I did," adding, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Were I the finest of writers, which I am not, being but a moderate scribe, although I received an education much above my pretensions, I should despair of describing the sweet, bright look which my wife gave me as I uttered these last words. It was a look which, however, I shall never forget to my dying day; and yet from that time for some weeks I continued very low, and my appetite failed so entirely that my wife was

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alarmed, and would have me send for a doctor, but I put her off; it was, however, during that period that I was led really to pray, and to lift up my heart to God while I was at work.

Thus things went on till the week before Easter, at which time the good lady on our first floor was taken so ill, and required so much attention, that we were obliged to call in the assistance of the daughter of a neighbour, whom I had always thought to be a very honest and respectable woman; this girl accordingly came backward and forward, sometimes holding the infant, and sometimes waiting on the lady, and she pleased us very well. The lady, however, began to get better on the Thursday, and on the Saturday morning, while I was in the shop, a penny-post letter, dated from the Castle and Falcon, in the city, was put into my hand. It was a rare thing with me to receive a letter, and my hand trembled as I opened it; neither was I less uneasy when I had read it throughout, for it was signed by a name I did not recollect, and requested my presence at the above-mentioned inn some time during the day.

Without saying a word of the letter to my wife, I directed her to mind the shop, saying, I was going out for a short time; and having staid only to put on my best coat and hat, hastened to the appointed place; but what was my astonishment when arrived at the Castle and Falcon, to find the business on account of which the gentleman had written to me.

It was to pay me down on the hand the sum of thirty-six pounds, which had been left to me by a very distant relation, who had died about four weeks past, and the sum had been intrusted to his especial care, as he had seen me when a stripling, and had had a regard for my father. The gentleman knew me immediately, and brought himself very speedily to my recollection; but he could not so easily make me comprehend the blessing,—for I must call it one,—which awaited me; and when he did at length make me understand it, he had something to do to bring me to my sober senses, so overcome was I with joy. At length, however, he counted down the money in two five pound bank-notes, and the rest in hard cash; and having taken my receipt, though my hand trembled so I could scarcely write my name, he gave me a yellow canvass bag to put the money in, and directed me to hide it about my person.

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where it would not be easily detected by those light-fingered folks who are so busy about town. He also walked with me to the Exchange, for he saw that I was beside myself, and put me into a stage, which soon set me down at my own door, at the price only of a shilling. My wife was in the shop when the coach stopped, and saw me get out; poor thing, how perplexed she looked; but I came in, and shutting the door behind me "Aly!" I said, "now indeed is our time for thanking God; do not be frightened," I added, for she was looking hard in my face, seeing that in it which she could not understand; "let us praise God together. Could I ever have doubted the goodness of God! I am a richer man by thirty-six pounds than I was two hours ago;" then striking my hand upon the place where the bag lay near my heart, I led the way, all trembling as I was, up to a roon next to our own, which was at the top of the house, and there I told her all that had happened, showing her the bag, and counting out the money to her.

The first feelings of the poor woman on hearing this news led her to weep and sob like one hysterical, so that I was glad that I had brought her out of hearing; and then to fall on her knees, to thank her God, in which expression of thankfulness I failed not to unite with her; and then hearing the child crying below, we locked up the treasure in an old carved chest where my wife kept her linen, and came down to dinner, which was just ready.

Anne Rouse, the neighbour's daughter of whom I spoke above, was in and out all dinner time, therefore my wife and I did not feel ourselves at liberty to unburthen our minds by speaking of the blessings which had been thus suddenly showered upon us, and customers coming in immediately after dinner, I was busy for as much as two hours; but at the end of that time, when the shop was clear, Aly came to me, with the babe in her arms, and a bundle of small papers tied up together in her hand.

"I have been up, Joseph," she said, "and fetched down the unpaid bills; and I have been reckoning them up; they come to thirty-eight pounds ten, and all is owing to persons close round about us. Now, will you oblige me so far—will you put your hat on, and take the money this very night, and pay all we owe? There is

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thirty-six pounds in the bag, God be praised!" she added, "and perhaps two pounds in the till,—and I could, at a push, borrow a few shillings from our good lady above-stairs. Now, do oblige me, Joseph; do go this night, and then to-morrow, with the Divine permission, with what light spirits shall we hail the happy and holy morning! Dear Joseph, grant me only this favour."

"What is the woman in such a hurry for?" I replied. "Why, Aly, I have been thinking that it would answer much better to lay out this money, or part of the money, in materials for our work, rather than to—"

She interrupted me; "It is not ours, Joseph," she said, "while we owe it to others. If it were only in a worldly point of view, think what credit we should get among our neighbours by this act of justice; and then when our heavenly Father has been so good—so wonderfully good—as to put it in our power to relieve ourselves of the burthen of debt which has long lain so heavily on our hearts, would it not be tempting him if we refused to use his gift for the purpose which he no doubt intended?"

"But, Aly, you need not tell me," I answered, "that the debt has lain heavily on your mind; you have never shown me that it did."

"Have not I?" replied Aly, with the tears in her bright eye. "Ah, Joseph!" she added, "have I not worked and denied myself every thing I could possibly spare; and should I have done this had I not felt the burthen?" and again she pleaded, and pleaded even with tears, that I would go out immediately and pay the bills, until other customers came in to cut short the dialogue.

At six o'clock, and not before, the shop being empty, Aly called me in to tea, and then commenced her entreaties again, with an earnestness and pertinacity I had never before witnessed in her.

It has always been a habit of mine (and I believe it is that of most husbands when there is any little family dispute) to become more loud and decisive in their tones and expressions of denial, in proportion as they feel their resolutions giving way; in accordance with which custom, when I began to feel that my wife was right and that I was wrong, I thundered out the following words: "I wish, woman, you would let me manage my own affairs; the money is safe enough in the great chest, and there, at all events, it shall be till Monday,

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and then I shall consider what I shall do with it; but you and the children must be put into mourning, and that, with a full suit of black for me, will take seven pounds at the very least out of the thirty-six."

My wife made no answer to this; but getting up in haste went to the door which opens on the stair-foot, and there started back as persons do who are suddenly met by one they did not expect. The person who encountered her was Anne Rouse, bringing down the tea-things from the lady; my wife's eyes were full of tears, and her face much flushed, and not desiring that the girl should have any idea that there had been any thing like a matrimonial dispute between her and me (for such things are never creditable in any line of life), she turned as suddenly from the stair-foot, and ran out into the garden, where I saw her rub her hand across her eyes, at the same time picking a rose, and pressing it against them, in order that it might impart somewhat of its balmy coolness to their burning lids.

I looked after her; I saw this action; my heart was touched; I snatched up the bills, and, while the girl was busy in some other direction, ran up to the chest, brought down the money, and having emptied the till, ran out, and so well performed my wife's behests, that at the end of two hours, for so long I was out, I came back with my yellow bag entirely emptied of its gold and bank-notes, and containing nothing but three papers of halfpence, worth one shilling each, which one of my creditors had given me in change for want of silver, the horrible bills against me having been exchanged into so many receipts beautifully stamped and duly signed; and although I had taken every farthing out of the till before I had gone out, I was not penniless; for, besides the halfpence in the bag, I had received several small presents by way of discount (though I could not have asked such considerations), to the amount of three or four shillings, from my several creditors.

When I arrived at home, I found the shop shut, and the windows closed; and having let myself in with my key, I walked into the kitchen, where I found my wife all alone busy with her needle; but there was something of apprehension on her countenance as she looked up to me, and an expression on her features as if she would have asked me where I had been. "There, Aly," I said, "there, I have done your bidding; there is the bag

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empty of all but a few pence, and there are the receipts; and here," I added, "here is all that is left of our store," and I laid a few odd shillings on the table. The excellent woman looked at me for a moment, and then springing up, she threw her dear arms round my neck, and sobbed quite loud.

"Oh! Joseph, Joseph," she exclaimed, "now indeed am I happy! now indeed is all right!" and she clasped her hands, and raised them up in an act of thanksgiving to Him from whom all blessings flow, calling the day a day of mercies, a day abounding with tokens and earnests of the Divine love; for it was a common feeling of hers to take every temporal benefit as the earnest of others more glorious and more spiritual at a future day; and so strong indeed was her faith that she received every affliction in the same spirit, that is, as an act of love, though she would, at the same time, confess that these temporal chastisements were not agreeable to flesh and blood.

It was that evening, for the first time, that I consented to read and pray with her before we went to bed, a custom which, with God's blessing, I have been enabled to keep up from that period.

Before I laid myself down in my bed, I threw the bag of halfpence into the chest, because it was heavy to carry in my pocket, and locked the box as usual, putting away the key.

I awoke the following morning with the pleasant feeling that something had happened which had made me very happy; and because we could not all leave the house, I took my little James in my arms to church in the morning, and after dinner my wife took the infant with her to the nearest place of worship. In the evening, when we had put our babes to bed, we took a turn together in our little garden, and I thought I had never before enjoyed so sweet a season in the society of my wife; her talk was all of the nature of the feelings of our heavenly Father towards his people, which she made appear to me, and that from Scripture itself, to be all love, perfect love, intense love, even passing that of a mother for her first-born; and I shall never forget two or three Scripture passages which she brought forward on that occasion, which passages have ever since appeared to me to be more beautiful and tender than any thing which man ever spoke or ever wrote: Isaiah xlix.

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15, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." John iii. 16, 17, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

This sweet conversation was broken up by a little sprinkling of rain and threatenings of a storm which drove us into the house, and we were hardly in bed when it began to thunder, and soon afterward the rain drove against the window with a noise so loud as to awaken my wife; but, as it continued to rain some time, we fell asleep again; but my wife, waking me again about three o'clock, told me that she had heard a noise somewhat like a mouse or a cat in the next room, asking me, if by chance I had not shut the cat in? We listened a while, but all being still, slept again.

It was four o'clock when I awoke the next time, and the day was peeping; the rain had entirely ceased, but there was a fresh breeze, and now, as I lay awake, I heard distinctly a door creaking on its hinges.

I sprang up immediately, without waking my wife, and dressing myself speedily, went down stairs, merely thinking that the storm of last night might have forced open some door below; and when I got into the kitchen I found the door of a small pantry we had, which opened into the kitchen, and which I remembered to have locked as I went up to bed, swinging on its hinges, being continually driven back against the wall by a strong breeze which entered in by a window of about four feet square, which was in the pantry; on looking in I found this window, which also opened on hinges, wide open, and having one pane taken clean out; this pane was handy to the hasp, and had been removed, no doubt, to let in a hand to open the hasp.

I stood like one confounded for a moment, and then observed the marks of muddy steps upon the kitchen floor, and following these with my eye, they led straight across the kitchen to the stair-foot.

"The rogues!" thought I, "who could thus have instructed them in the secrets of the house!" But I followed the track, and traced the miry footsteps all up the stairs to the door of the inner room.

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"Is it so!" thought I, still following on; "have they scented the gold and bank-notes! but they would have spared themselves the trouble, no doubt, had they known that the birds are flown." The door of this room was unlatched; I opened it softly, and behold, though it was not yet broad day, I saw that the chest was open, and, as I expected, the yellow bag was gone clean off. A precious prize, to be sure, and one worth risking a man's life for indeed! But nothing else was disturbed in the box. I am almost ashamed to say how this discovery affected me; for I set to and laughed till my very sides ached; but the feeling I think was a sort of nervous one, and I was, as it were, quite thrown off my balance by the idea of the narrow escape which I had had, of losing that very thirty-six pounds which were, under Providence, to be the making of me; and I should as surely have lost them as I lost the thirty-six penny pieces, if my wife had not urged me as she did to do the honest thing.

But, as I say, there I stood and laughed, and laughed again, till I wakened my wife, who presently came to me, with her clothes thrown hastily on, inquiring with no small alarm what ailed me? "Do you see that, Aly?" I said, pointing to the open chest; "the rogues were in here last night; they got through the pantry window; they have picked the lock, and have carried away the thirty-six pieces."

"Oh Joseph," she exclaimed, "have you deceived me? Did you not pay the bills, and bring back the receipts?" and the poor woman looked ready to faint.

I soothed and assured her as speedily as possible, for she was as pale as death; and then the warm blood mounted to her cheeks and to her very brow, and down she fell on her knees, thanking her heavenly Father for this new token of his tender care.

"Can you doubt now, Joseph," she said, "can you doubt now of the paternal care of God? Where should we be now, had we not been guided to do the right thing on Saturday night, for the bag is gone past recovery? And it little matters; the wicked men will have their punishment in their disappointment, when they find the heavy purse to contain only a few pence; and may God bless the disappointment to them; but I fear much," she added, "that Anna Rouse is at the bottom of this; she was listening, no doubt, on the stair-foot when we were speaking together on the Saturday

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evening; but I greatly dread lest it was by her instigation that this villany was contrived. I hope I do not wrong her, but my suspicions are strong."

My wife and I then busied ourselves to ascertain that nothing else but the bag had been taken; and when we had got the blacksmith to put strong bars to the pantry window, things fell into their usual course with us, although we never could forget the merciful providence by which we had been preserved, as it were, from temporal ruin. For years from that time passed before we could raise as much as would have set us free from debt, had we not preserved that thirty-six pounds; but we shifted to live, and to live comfortably, and to bring up our children, and settle them in the world, since which we have been able to put a little by against old age, which is now coming on with rapid pace.

And I can say, and say with thankfulness, that although I am one of the smallest in the kingdom of God, one of the least worthy among the children of men of the Divine favour,—and I do not say this from a mere fashion of speaking, but perhaps because I can see more of the workings of my own corrupt heart than I can possibly do of those of any other,—yet that ever since that period of my life of which I have given a particular account, I have had such continued proofs of the Divine favour, such assurances that all things work together for good to those who are brought, through the influence of God the Spirit, to desire to be made one with God the Son, that I would rather see the wife of my bosom, and every child of whom she has made me the happy father, laid low in their graves, than see one of them impiously desiring to separate himself from that God in the union with whom all created beings alone can find that happiness for which Divine mercy originally prepared them, and which (this happiness being lost to them through the malice of the evil one) every Divine attribute has since been exercised to render back to them.

END OF THE BASKET-MAKER.

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THE BUTTERFLY.

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THE BUTTERFLY.

It was on a fine morning in the lovely month of May, that Mr. Feild walked out with his children in a beautiful park which bordered on his pleasant garden, and afforded a delightful prospect from the windows of his house.

It was one of Mr. Feild's greatest pleasures to walk in an afternoon with his children, when their daily tasks were performed; and it was in these their walking hours that he gave them some of their most valuable lessons, taking his subjects from the many lovely and curious objects of nature which were spread before him, among the valleys and uplands, the lawns, groves, and waterfalls, which were enclosed within the paling of the park. Sometimes he sat down with them under the shade of a tree, or by the side of a brook, and sometimes he gave them leave to wander about in any direction whither their fancies might lead them, yet always insisting that they should not go beyond the reach of his voice.

On the day of which we are writing, the park was more delightful than usual. There was a most pleasant odour of hawthorn in the breeze, and the tender leaves were of a bright and fresh green,—millions of insects were playing in the sunbeams, rejoicing in their new being, and displaying their tiny wings of gold and purple, amethyst and sapphire.

"Papa," said William, Mr. Feild's eldest son, "I remember coming to this place one very cold day last winter, and I did not then see one of these insects. Where were they at that time?"

"Perhaps God has made them since," remarked little Mary. "God made the world in six days, and it would take him very little time to make all these insects,—they only look like so many small grains of sand with wings put to them."

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"My dear Mary," remarked Mr. Feild, "if you were a little older, I should say you were talking very foolishly. Do you not know that every grain of sand is quite solid throughout, and as heavy for its size as any other stone, while these little insects are as nicely and finely proportioned, and have all their members and vital parts as delicately, and even more delicately made than yours? And though we know that they are not immortal, and have no souls, yet they have their passions, and feelings, and interests, like ourselves; and they have great care and foresight for their young ones, even before they come into life."

"How do people know these things, papa?" said Emma, who was two years older than Mary, and did not accustom herself to talk so much without thinking as her little sister did. "Those insects are so very small that we can only see them when they pass between us and the sun; how then can people find out their ways, or tell that they are made and proportioned so nicely?"

"By looking at them, my dear," replied the father, "through a sort of glass called a microscope, which makes them appear a great deal larger than they are. By these glasses it is found that many of them are most beautiful, and all of them very curious. Some are covered with a thick plumage, exceedingly fine and delicate, and enriched with the most bright and glorious colours. Others are covered with horny scales, such as were imitated by the ancient warriors, and such as you have often seen in old pictures. Others are clothed with an exceedingly minute coat of silky hair, of most brilliant tints, some being all of one colour, and others shaded off, and blended with various hues, like those of the rainbow.

"The Almighty God, who created all things, has indeed shown his inimitable skill in the forming of these little creatures, in a manner by which we are made to understand, that, if such delicate attention is paid to the myriads of insects which live their little moment on earth, and then perish for ever, and if he can condescend to occupy himself in adorning and enriching these in such a variety of ways, and taking care for the support and continuation of each separate species, we cannot expect that any action, or even thought, of ours shall escape his notice. For what can be a plainer

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proof of that attribute of the Almighty which is called Omniscience, than the care which he takes in creating and preserving the amazing variety of insects!"

"But, papa," said William, "I think that you are using some words which Mary will not understand, and you have asked me to remind you when you use hard words."

"I thank you, my dear boy," said Mr. Feild, "for remembering so well what I have desired you to do; and in order to find out what Mary understands of what I have just said, she shall repeat it to me in her own language."

"Why, papa," said Mary, "you told us, that if God can watch and take care of so many little insects, all at the same time, we cannot think that he will not know when we do any thing naughty, or have any bad thoughts."

"Very well, my little Mary," replied Mr. Feild; "but do you know the meaning of the word Omniscient?"

"No, papa," said Mary; "but I know that it is one of those words which people say when they talk about God."

"It means knowing every thing," said Mr. Feild; "God knows every thing, and sees every thing, and therefore these words are written in Hebrews iv. 13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

"Please, papa," said Emma, "to tell us something more about insects; what you have told us already is so very curious."

"Insects, my dear children," said Mr. Feild, "are divided into twelve different orders, and these orders are again subdivided into different families; and it would take more than a long life to study the various habits and appearances of only a small part of these different species. But there are people who have given their minds to these things, and we are greatly obliged to them for the books which they have written, and the very curious accounts they have given us, of many of these little creatures."

"Papa," said William, "I should much like to know the name of the twelve different classes of insects."

"Were I to give them to you now, my dear son, you would not remember them: but it would be well worth

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your while to make yourself further acquainted with these subjects. The study of the works of God in the natural world, of flowers, insects, birds, beasts, and trees, with the heavenly bodies, is that which renders our walks in the country ever new and ever profitable; and then when we are made to understand that many of the objects in nature are so formed, and so arranged, as to be types and emblems of things unseen and spiritual; then there is indeed another new and delightful prospect opened for our consideration—such a one indeed as dark and ignorant persons cannot even conceive."

Mr. Feild was interrupted in this place by his youngest girl, who requested him to tell her what types and emblems are.

"Types and emblems, my dear child," replied the good father, "are representations which agree in some particulars with the thing represented, but not in *all*. Every Christian," continued he, "knows that a milk-white lamb is the type of our Lord Jesus Christ, because it resembles him in these particulars, viz. that *it is* harmless and meek, and makes no resistance when shorn or slain. The sun is also a type of Christ, because it illuminates, warms, and animates the whole earth. The sea is a type of a multitude of unholy men, because it rages and storms, and dashes against the shore, and tries to break its bounds. And trees are types or emblems of good and bad men, who profess Christianity, because they grow in the wilderness and the garden of God, and are clothed with leaves, and bear fruit good or bad. And insects, my dear William," continued Mr. Feild, "afford, one and all, very curious types of the various states of man, from his first entering into being until his going out of this world into eternity."

"How is that, papa?" said the little boy; "I do not understand it."

"Can you tell me, William," replied Mr. Feild, "what are the various states in which human creatures are known to be?"

"I would rather you would tell me, papa," replied William; "for though I have some notion of what you wish me to say, yet I know that I shall make some blunder."

"Well then, my dear, I will tell you," said the father.

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"Every human creature goes through four states:—The first is that which is before breath and life are given to an infant.—The second, after he is born, and is able to eat, and drink, and grow, and use his limbs: this state lasts till death.—The third is when he lies a dead and dull corpse in the grave.—And the fourth, when he bursts his tomb, and comes forth either to everlasting life or everlasting misery."

"But, papa," asked Emma, "how can insects be like us in these things?"

"I will explain this immediately, my dear," said Mr. Feild. "And first, I must make you understand that all insects pass through four states; and you must now hear some hard words, which you must try to remember.—The first of these states is that of the egg. All insects are born from eggs, which are laid by their mothers in some safe place, and left there till the time of their being hatched; for insects do not, in general, tend and watch their offspring, or sit and hatch their eggs, as birds do; but commonly die after they have laid their eggs."

"But, papa, how do the old insects know where to put their eggs?" said William.

"They are taught by God how and in what manner to do this best for the safety of their unborn young ones," replied Mr. Feild; "and great indeed must be the wisdom and power of that God who thus carefully instructs these little creatures, and leads them to do thus wisely in their generations."

"Really, papa, all this is very curious," remarked William; "and now please to tell us what is the next state of insects, when they come out of their eggs."

"When insects come out of their eggs," replied Mr. Feild, "which each family does at that time of the year best suited to its nature, they are named larvæ. The larvæ of different insects are what we call caterpillars, grubs, maggots, and worms. They are of different shapes and colours, according to the different families to which they belong. During this time they crawl or roll about, having no wings wherewith to rise in the air, and are exceedingly greedy of food, eating voraciously of every thing supplied for their use by Providence. In this state they answer to man, from the hour of his birth to that of his death: and when we look on these worms, maggots, or grubs, or whatever else you may

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choose to call them, we may understand what we ourselves are by nature, namely, earthly, greedy, sensual creatures; born indeed to immortality, but carrying about with us vile bodies, which may say unto the worm, *Thou art our mother;* that is, we partake of thy nature."

"Well, then, papa, it seems that without grace we are all grubs, maggots, and worms," said William. "Well, sometimes when I have done wrong I have thought myself worse than the vilest insect. But, dear papa, what comes next to the larvæ—I have not forgotten the word—what is the next change which insects go through?"

"Insects remain in the state of grubs or maggots, some only a few hours, days, or weeks, and some several months or years," replied Mr. Feild. "They then cease eating, fix themselves in a safe place, and lie for a time swathed and trussed up like babes in swaddling-clothes, being enclosed in a kind of outer skin or cone. The silk-worm and some others have this outer skin enveloped in a sort of silk, some of which is tinged with gold, for which reason the ancients called them chrysalides and aureliæ."

"Oh, papa! that reminds me," said William, "that I have often found insects shut up in a kind of bag, or between two leaves, and lying like dead things. But what are we to call insects in this state?"

"They are called pupæ, my dear William," replied Mr. Feild; "and, as I before said, the ancients named the bags in which some of them are enclosed chrysalides or aureliæ, from their golden colour. They have also been called pods or husks, and beans and cocoons. And now tell me what an insect lying as it were in a deep sleep, in his pupa state, is most like, my dear William," said Mr. Feild.

Emma was about to answer, but William placed his hand on her mouth somewhat hastily, saying, "No, Emma, that is not fair; you have left me to answer all the hard questions, and now you want to show your cleverness by answering the easy ones. Anybody might tell what an insect lying asleep and wrapped up in his winding-sheet, is most like. It is like a man who, having eaten, and drunk, and lived out his time in this world, lies down in his grave, and remains in the sleep of death, waiting till his fourth state should come."

"Very well, my dear boy," said Mr. Feild; "yet I do not know why all this might not have been said without putting yourself into so violent an agitation."

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"Because Emma would speak, papa," replied William.

"Well," said Mr. Feild, "and now it shall be Emma's turn to speak.—What, Emma, is that state of man into which he enters after death?"

"An immortal state, papa, either of misery or happiness," replied the little girl.

"It is an awful truth, Emma," said Mr. Feild, "that man, whether raised again to happiness or misery, enters after death into a new state of being, where his faculties will probably be enlarged, and his body set free from its present infirm and perishing state—a circumstance which will add as much to the misery of the wicked as to the happiness of the redeemed. In like manner, with few exceptions, every insect, when liberated from his state of sleep, enters upon a new mode of existence, and is furnished with wings, and, in many instances, wonderfully beautified and elevated in the scale of being."

"What is this new state called, papa?" asked William.

"The imago, my dear boy," said Mr. Feild, "because, having laid aside its mask, and cast off its bands, it then becomes the true representative, or image, of its kind, and a perfect creature in its way,—such as we hope to be when death shall be swallowed up in victory."

"Really, papa," said Emma, "the more I hear of all this, the more curious I find it. Only think, that in the history of these little insects we should find a sort of picture of our whole lives, and even of what we are to be,—how very wonderful!"

"Indeed, my dear Emma, it is wonderful, and so wonderful that the ancients, who were not blessed as we are with the knowledge of true religion, thought they saw the emblem of the immortality of the soul in the metamorphosis of the butterfly from a caterpillar; though they could not see, at the same time, that of the resurrection of the body."

"What do you mean by that, papa?" asked Emma.

"Why, my dear," returned Mr. Feild, "the ancient heathens never had any idea that the body would rise again, though it was well understood by Job, who uses this expression, *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.*"

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"Really, papa," replied Emma, "I think the ancients were very dull then; for, however different a caterpillar may be from a butterfly, yet it is very certain that it is the same creature that was shut up in the chrysalis which comes out with wings,—is not it, papa?"

"To be sure it is, my dear; but then there is so much difference between a beautiful butterfly and a heavy crawling caterpillar, that we can hardly wonder that they, who knew nothing of the resurrection of the body, should only see the emblem of the soul in the glorious winged insect which broke forth from the winding-sheet; and this resemblance they thought so perfect and so striking, that the Greeks gave the same name to a butterfly as to the human soul."

"What is that name, papa?" asked William.

"Psyche, my dear boy," replied Mr. Feild; "and the old Egyptians made a very curious fable about Psyche."

"You say, papa," said William, "that most insects go through the same changes as the butterfly; but they do not all come out of their sleep in the glorious form of butterflies, do they? For there are many insects that have wings, that are very ugly, and very mischievous and cruel, armed with stings, and very dreadful and terrible."

"There are, my dear child," answered Mr. Feild; "and therefore if we apply the emblem of the beautiful butterfly to glorified human beings when arisen from the dead, we may apply that of the hornet, and other evil insects, to those persons who enter into an immortality where there is no hope of blessedness. Daniel xii. 2.—*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*"

"Really, papa," said William, "these things are very strange. I shall never see an insect flying about without thinking of the resurrection, and of the time when we shall all rise from our graves, and spread our wings, and enter into a new life. Oh! how do I hope that we may then be among those of whom the butterfly is the emblem."

"We shall be, my dear boy," said Mr. Feild, "such as we were in kind, though not in degree, as when we entered the grave. Of whatever nature the pupa was before it entered its state of sleep, so will it be when it comes out from thence. In like manner, we shall be

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the same when we rise from the grave as when we entered into it. We may, indeed, be spiritualized, and, in many instances, I trust, glorified, and beautified, and disencumbered of many infirmities. But our nature will not be changed, that is, the nature of our souls. The body, indeed, which was sown in corruption, will be raised in incorruption; but unless the spirit has been renewed, and a new nature imparted before death, we cannot expect to enter into glory. Our great care, therefore, my beloved children, should be, that we may enter into the grave in that state which will ensure our joyful resurrection."

While Mr. Feild was still speaking, a beautiful butterfly appeared, floating on her glorious wings in the balmy air.

"Come, little preacher," said Emma, "come, and teach us how we are to die, and how we must rise again. Papa, I shall now always call butterflies preachers, and I hope you will often bring us into these woods to hear their sermons."

"Yes, my children, with all my heart," replied Mr. Feild; "and if I should find you some more preachers among the insect tribe, you will, perhaps, not now be surprised."

Mr. Feild then taught his children the following lines from the poem called, *The Butterfly's Birth-day*:—

Shall the poor worm that shocks thy sight,
The humblest form in nature's train,
Thus rise in new-born lustre bright,
And yet the emblem teach in vain?

Ah! where were once her golden eyes,
Her glittering wings with purple died?
Concealed beneath a rude disguise,
A shapeless mass to earth allied.

Like thee the helpless insect lived,
Like thee he toiled, like thee he spun,
Like thine his closing hour arrived,
His labour ceased, his web was done.

And shalt thou, numbered with the dead,
No happier state of being know?
And shall no future morrow shed
On thee a beam of brighter glow?

END OF THE BUTTERFLY.

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ALUNE;

OR,

LE BÄCHEN HÖLZLI.

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ALUNÉ;

OR,

LE BÄCHEN HÖLZLI.

Near to the town of Thounne, in Swisserland, and on the borders of the beautiful lake which bears the same name, is a little wood, called Le Bächen Hölzli. Being on the Continent some months ago, and coming to Thounne, I was so much delighted with the inn, whose walls are washed by the waters of the lake, that I took up my abode in it for several days, making little excursions from it, either by water or by land, and visiting many of the wonderful scenes in the neighbourhood; for Thounne lies in the midst of mountains, the lowest of which are many thousand feet in height, and the highest of which are covered with what is called eternal snow, that is, with the snows of many winters, which, being only partially melted in the summer, continue from age to age to cover the heights, and render them visible at an almost inconceivable distance; for in Swisserland the traveller often sees the sparkling peaks of the snow-crowned hills lifted above the clouds, far up in the horizon. Now, wherever there are such hills as I am describing, there are beautiful valleys, and bold rocks, and waterfalls, and, if the climate will permit, magnificent trees, and flowers of every species, from those which are cherished by the warm breezes in the sunny valleys, to those which delight in the bleak cold heights of the regions of everlasting snow.

It would be tiresome to you to repeat the names of all the mountains which are seen from the Lake of Thounne; but there are nine ranges of them, and among these is the Jungfrau, which is supposed to be one of the highest mountains in Europe. Most of these mighty hills were visible from my room in the inn, and I visited the valleys

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between several of them, but the place I loved best at Thounne was Le Bächen Hölzli.

This is a little wood, situated on a gentle rising above the lake. It belongs to the house of some gentleman; but there are many narrow paths cut in the wood, for the use of those who desire to enjoy its pleasant shades, and the gate is open to every one. No one knows how old this wood is, or how long it has been laid out nearly as it now is, for this place once belonged to a monastery, being given to the church by Sir Henry Strettingen, a knight who lived three hundred or more years since, and whose castle may still be seen on the opposite shores of the lake, under a range of hills called the Stockenburgh.

It was a beautiful evening in the month of May when I first visited Le Bächen Hölzli. I had strolled out all alone, and had entered the wood under an archway made with boughs of trees, and I had walked through many shady quiet paths, till I came out upon a high open walk, from which I saw before me a number of fair meadows, scattered with vineyards and beautiful cottages, and ancient towers and magnificent trees; and beyond these meadows, the clear calm waters of the lake, and other fair fields, extending themselves to the foot of the Stockenburgh, and these were all spread before me as I walked along the high path under the trees, in the clear distinct light of that pleasant evening; and though the air was fresh, not a breeze waved a bough, and there was no sound but those which proceeded from different birds, some of which I observed winging their way across the fields. Among these, that bird which pleased me best was the cuckoo, because it reminded me of the home of my fathers, then far away. So I went slowly forward, and presently found a stone-seat under a tree, and near to that seat, hanging on another tree, an ancient suit of armour, which had been there so long that the ivy had grown over the shield, and the rust had eaten deep into the sword; there I stood for a while looking at this memorial of ancient days, and anticipating with delight that blessed period when our Saviour shall return, and there shall be war no more, and "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks." Micah iv. 3. Still finding myself somewhat weary, I sat down on the bench, to enjoy the thoughts which had been put into my mind by

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the sight of the old armour, which armour, as I afterward found, had belonged to the old knight to whom, in time past, this place had appertained.

While thus situated, I heard a step, a quick light step, advancing towards me, and presently I saw a young girl coming along the path, in the beautiful dress of the Bernese peasants. The girl might perhaps not have been more than twelve, though taller than young people generally are at that age, and slender in proportion, and she had a sweet fair countenance, though there was a sadness in her air, which struck me at the first glance; and she came on, as I before said, with a quick step, having a light wicker basket hanging on her arm, through the open meshes of which appeared portions of wild flowers, which it seemed that she had been engaged in selecting from the vast and inexhaustible treasures of nature.

I paid this little peasant the compliment of a respectful bend of the head as she came near to me, whereupon she stopped short just before me, and taking a flower, with its leaves and roots, from her store, she asked me if I would please to accept it, that is, she added, if I were curious in these matters, for it seemed, as she told me, that it was a rare specimen, and she counted herself very fortunate in having found several of them but a few minutes since.

"And how is it," I replied, "my little maiden, that you should be able to judge of the rare and the curious amid the herbs of the field? is not every flower an example of the Divine skill, and are not the most beautiful often the most common?"

"They are, sir," answered the little girl; "and my grandmother says that the Almighty shows his goodness to us in adorning every cottage garden with beauties such as no art can imitate; but it is necessary for me to search out those which are rare, and not easily found, for the others are but little profit to me." She then made me understand that it was her habit in the summer months to seek rare specimens of plants in the mountains, in order that she might dry and sell them to strangers; "and what I sell them for, sir," she added, "helps to pay our rent; for my grandmother is not rich, and she has only me of all her children; the rest are gone," she added, and thus speaking, she burst into tears.

"Gone!" I exclaimed; "where gone?"

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"Dead, sir," she replied. "They are dead, all dead, and my grandmother has none left but me;" and thus saying, she set her slender basket upon the grass, and turned weeping from me, as if she would have hid her deep sorrows from every eye.

I respected her feelings, and did not address her again for some moments; at length I said, "You did but just now speak of the Divine goodness in providing so many ornaments for the garden of the humblest cottager, and you might have added, that such is his liberality, that he causes 'it to rain on the earth where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth." Job xxxviii. 26, 27. I cannot therefore suppose, since you have been led to see and remark his lesser benefits, that you have been brought up in ignorance of that crowning act of mercy, by which we, the children of a sinful race, are admitted to the hope of a glory and happiness which we cannot now even conceive."

She turned, all tearful as she was, on being thus addressed, and said, with much beautiful earnestness of manner, "We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in him is our only hope."

"It is well," I replied; "and you are blessed in having been instructed in that which flesh and blood could never have taught; for so our Lord said to Peter, when he said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'—'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.'" Matt. xvi. 17.

"My grandmother is very pious, sir," replied the little girl; "we read the Holy Bible every day; and she has tried to make me understand what I am, a miserable sinner; and to lead me to submit my will in all things to my heavenly Father."

"And no doubt," I replied, "that she has told you that he does not 'afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.'" Lam. iii. 33.

"Those were the very words she used, sir," replied the little girl, "when my little brother breathed his last; my father was dead then, and my mother too, and when Wilhelm died, then all were gone but me; he died in his cradle, sir; he was not too tall to lie in it, sir, and he

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could not speak plain, but my grandmother thought he understood when she knelt and prayed by him."

"He is blessed, no doubt," I answered; "he was of the number of those of whom our Lord said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.'"

"My grandmother says," she answered, "that she has no anxiety about his happiness, or that of my parents; for my father and mother feared God."

"And yet," I said, "you cannot cease from weeping and lamenting them."

"It is because we miss them everywhere," said the little girl, "and we are not rich, sir; we find it hard to live: we do not owe any thing, indeed, but it grieves me to see my poor grandmother without those comforts which her age requires."

"And what do you do when troubles weigh heavy?" I asked.

"I pray, sir," she replied; "I ask my God to help me: grandmother says, that I may speak to my Saviour as I would to a friend, because he knoweth what we need, and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

"And have you always been in the habit of opening your troubles to your God?" I asked.

"Not always, sir," she answered, with a sweet and gracious expression of humility, and conviction of former offences; "when Wilhelm was alive I thought very little of God; but when my brother died, I had no comfort but in my Bible."

"And what are the especial troubles which you mention in your prayers?" I asked.

She blushed on being thus closely questioned, but replied directly, "I pray that we may not be uneasy about paying our rent, sir, and that grandmother may not have her rheumatism in the winter, and that we may both be saved from our sins, and be redeemed, and that I may be spared to her as long as she lives, and that she may never be obliged to leave the cottage, sir, where she was born, and where she lived with her husband and reared my father: is there any harm, sir, in praying for these things?"

"I see none, my dear child, whatever," I replied, "since I trust that you make your petitions in the way prescribed by Scripture, viz. through the name of Christ,

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as it is written, St. John xiv. 13, 'And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.'"

"I do, sir," she answered.

"And have you reason to think that the Almighty is deaf to your prayers?"

"No, sir," she replied, "I am sure that no prayer which is addressed to God in the name of the Redeemer is ever unheard; but grandmother says, that God is wiser than we are, and that he knows best what is good for us, and so seems to deny us sometimes."

"This is perfectly true, dear child; but may there not be some error in your manner of prayer, ay, and manner of thinking too, which requires to be amended?"

She evidently did not understand me; on which I added, "Are you in the habit of speaking much to your grandmother of the things which grieve you and make you uneasy?"

"No, sir," she replied with quickness; "no, sir, because that would be ungrateful, you know; she does every thing in her power to make me happy, so I try to be cheerful, and make the best of every thing before her."

"And you often thank her, no doubt," I added, "when she has done any thing for you?"

"I should be wicked if I did not," she answered.

"You think, then," I remarked, "that she has done more for you than your God has?"

"Oh! sir, no, no," she replied, eagerly; "how can that be?"

"But by your own account," I said, "your addresses to the Almighty all run in the style of complaint, as if you were more unhappy than others; is it not so?"

She looked down and seemed full of thought for a moment or more, and then raising her eyes said, "Sir, I think that what you say is true."

"Well, my little girl," I replied, "suppose that henceforward you were to change your style of address to God, and substitute praise and thanksgiving in the place of complaint and petition; think, rather, what mercies you have to thank God for, than what privations you have to endure."

She seemed to be again lost in thought, as if she were unable to take up my meaning at once; but her dark blue eye brightened as she began to comprehend me; and when the whole truth flashed on her mind she said,

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with animation, "Where, sir, where am I to begin to recount the mercies of my God!"

"Ah! where indeed!" I answered; "for the earth is full of his mercies. But begin with the work of redeeming love, and thank your God that your Saviour has been revealed to you and to all your family; that the troubles of this world are at an end with so many of them, and that they are already landed on the sunny shores beyond the black river of death. Then proceed to enumerate the lesser mercies which are showered upon you, life and health, and peace, and a quiet home in a land of unrivalled beauty, and a kind and pious parent to watch your early youth, and food sufficient (though plain perhaps), and a pleasant occupation, by which you may earn a little money—"

"And," said the little girl, all sparkling with animation, "and time and opportunity to read the Bible, and warm comfortable clothes, and a nice soft bed, and a garden full of blossoms: Oh, sir! thank you for teaching me these pleasant things; I hope that I shall remember your words, and practise your advice as long as I live."

"The Almighty helping you, my child," I said, "without whom we can do nothing, nay, not even think a good wholesome thought."

While I yet spoke, a clear musical voice, as of a child, was heard, repeating three several times, "Alune! Alune! Alune!" An indistinct echo immediately returned the sound, and then all was still again.

"What is that?" I asked.

"It is Herman, sir," she replied, "Herman calling me."

"And who is Herman?" I asked.

"A neighbour's son, sir," she answered; "and grandmother has sent him to look for me."

"If the call is from your grandmother, you must obey it," I remarked.

"I will, sir," she said; "but shall you ever come here again?"

"Would you wish to see me again?" I asked.

She looked down and twirled her basket round, holding it by its slender handle, and speaking in a lower tone, "I beg pardon, sir, but I was thinking that if you would say the same things to my grandmother which you have said to me, you might bring great comfort to her."

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"Then I will tell you what I will do, Alune," I answered, "that is, if I am permitted; I am going from hence to-morrow, to Interlachen and Grindeswald, and on to the mountains, but I hope to return in the end of August, and then, if you will receive me, I will call upon you at your cottage: will that please you?" But I need not have asked the question, for she had no sooner understood what I was proposing to do than the pure blood mantled in her cheek, and the light of joy kindled in her eye.

"The end of August, sir?" she replied; "can it not be sooner? I shall look for that time; but do you know our cottage, sir?"

"Truly, my little damsel," I answered, "the question is a discreet one, and perhaps I might have forgotten to ask it."

"Then, sir," said she, approaching somewhat nearer to me than she had ventured to do, "do you see the road that winds along the bank of the lake on the height?"

"I do," I replied; "here and there, like a white line among the green branches of the many trees which border upon it."

"And do you see, sir, a path which comes out of it on the left, less than a quarter of an hour from this place?"

"Truly, my little one," I answered, "my old eyes fail me there."

"It is in comparison with the road, sir," she answered, "as a thread to the broad riband that binds my hair; it is the first turning from hence."

"I shall know it best by that indication, Alune," I answered.

"Ah, good sir, have you learned my name?" she remarked, with a smile of innocent archness.

"Did I not hear it sounding through the valley but now?" I replied.

"From Herman," she said; "but I did not answer him, and he is gone in a wrong direction; poor Herman!" and she added with a smile, which just played on her lips and then gave way to more serious concerns, "but he must not complain, I do not often serve him so."

She then proceeded to endeavour to point out to me, at the end of the invisible line marked to her young eyes, along the breadth of many blooming fields, two

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cottages, equally invisible to my old eyes, which, she said, were under the brow of the nearest height on the left.

I was, however, enabled to ascertain the precise form of the sort of mole or point of the mountain which hung over the place I desired to know; and being so far instructed, I was satisfied. "And now, Alune," I said, "while we have been talking, the shades have ascended nearly to the summits of the mountains, and the sun's last rays are gilding the Jungfrau and its mighty neighbours, yet, ere we part, one word more; I expect that you will prepare for me an assemblage of dried flowers, of the rarest and fairest which you may see among these hills, and remember while you are gathering them, that the flowers which are spread upon the earth are the emblems of the Divine promises given to his redeemed ones, and set in every corner of the earth, in order that his children may ever be reminded of the inexhaustible mercies of the Father Almighty. Yet, tell me, my little girl, tell me if you can, where the emblem resembles that which it has been intended to show forth, and where it falls short of its object."

I found it necessary to repeat this question in plainer words before it was understood, but having succeeded, I obtained such an answer as I should never have received from a child of that age in the most refined classes of society, had not that child been brought up (as it was easy to observe that this little peasant had been) by a person whose mind had been illuminated and enlarged by deep and constant study of Scripture.

The answer was this: "Flowers, you say, sir, are like the promises of God, which, as grandmother says, are shed all over the Bible, and they are beautiful, and so are the promises; and they are very sweet, and so are the promises."

"And many pass by and overlook them, Alune," I added, "and so they do the promises."

"And we tread them under our feet, sir," she added, "and tear them and cast them away, as I have often done the promises," she added, quite in the spirit I could have wished.

"And when we throw away the blossom, Alune," I asked, "where is the prospect of fruit? but what was my first question, where does the emblem fall short of that which it is intended to show forth?"

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She was puzzled there, whereupon I said, "The grass withereth and the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

The little girl and I then parted, and I pursued my journey to the mountains the next day, nor did I return till nearly the end of August, when I once again found myself, early in the afternoon, near the precincts of Le Bächen Hölzli, and walking along the road which leads from Thounne, along the banks of the lake, which road terminates a short way farther onward. The little pathway described also by Alune soon presented itself, and I entered a range of green and beautiful fields, having that peculiar point of the hill before me which I had selected as my landmark. As I neared this point, I entered a small orchard of beautiful apple-trees; the grass was green beneath the trees, and several cows were feeding in the shade, for the day was hot. As I advanced, I observed one cottage and then another, through the shafts of the trees. These cottages were of that exquisitely beautiful form seen, I believe, in no part of the world so perfectly as in Swisserland; one stood more forward than the other, and in the wooden gallery in front I saw a venerable peasant, busy with her spinning-wheel,—it was Alune's grandmother, and as I presented myself in the little open space before the cottage, she knew immediately that I was the gentleman who was expected at that time by her granddaughter.

Accordingly she hastened down, and gave me a welcome as if I had been the dearest friend she had on earth. "Dear sir," she said, "Alune will be so happy —nay, sir, she has been happy ever since you spoke those blessed words; but come in," she added, "and take some refreshment, and then, sir, I will explain it all to you."

"I will have nothing till your supper-time," I answered: "I know your customs, you sup at sunset, then I will partake with you," and I followed her up her wooden stairs into a neat apartment, where was a long oaken table at one end, and a small fireplace at the other, a handsome Geneva clock being the only superior piece of furniture in the room. I was soon seated opposite to the old lady, who began to utter that which was uppermost in her thoughts, without the delay which a more courtly person would have used, yet with all

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that best polish of manner which is always found, in a greater or less degree, in persons studious of conforming themselves, or rather I should say of being conformed, to the image of the blessed Son of God. "Sir, she said, "I consider it as a particular favour bestowed on me by my heavenly Father, that my child happened to fall into your company in Le Bächen Hölzli. It pleased God at that time that you should drop a few words, which were made the means of opening my eyes to the principal sin of my very sinful life, viz. unthankfulness; which proceeds, my good sir, from unbelief, and that of the grossest sort: for how, sir, should we, who, I trust, have no doubt that Christ has died for us, have any fears lest all lesser good things which are necessary for us should be denied; for 'he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.' Rom. viii. 32.

"But, sir, I know not how it was (only that I was a wicked and worthless being, the chief of sinners), I had got into a sort of way, that although I had much comfort in the view of the Lord's goodness, as promised to me through Christ in the world to come, I could not discern the many earnests of his goodness in this world; however, the child, being instructed by you, sir, through the Divine blessing, came home that evening, and told me all that you had said to her; and that night, sir, after supper, and the door was shut, she said, 'Grandmother, now let us pray in the new way,' and as I did not forbid her, after we had read we knelt down, and as I had used her to do at times from a little one, led the prayer: Oh! it was beautiful, sir, it was instructive, it made out the words of Holy Writ, 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.' I could not tell you all the mercies the poor little girl found to enumerate, for they came in childlike, without much order or method, or, as it were, curious wording; but when she thanked God that her father and mother, and that sweet infant, her precious brother, were now rejoicing in heaven with their Redeemer, and not here in this world of sin, I could bear it no longer, but broke out in sobs and groans, being, as it were, struck to the heart, and confounded with a deep sense of my ingratitude, in having gone mourning so many years, through a land set thick with mercies. Well, sir, and that sweet spirit

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has held the child, and I often laugh and say, when she is suggesting subjects for our evening thanksgiving, that things will go well with her now since she finds flowers where others would pass by and say, the land is altogether naught and barren (alluding, sir, as you may perceive, to the way she has taken to get a few francs together to help us out). Well, sir, and somehow it seems that we are doing better, though how it comes I hardly can say, for by plain and downright calculation of that which comes in and that which goes out, things are with us much as they were this time last year, still are we better, sir, that is, more content."

"As a fair landscape is more agreeable when the bright rays of the morning glow thereon, than when dark clouds and mists overshadow it," I replied, "so much, my worthy friend, is your last state better than that which has gone before;" and I was proceeding, when the cheerful tones of young voices reached our ears, and looking from the latticed window, I saw my little favourite Alune, driving before her two white goats, with several young ones, which she was bringing from a thymy pasture on the hills, and with her a fine dark-eyed boy carrying a kid. "There is my bright child," said the old peasant, "and with her Herman I see, he has gone to meet her, to help her to carry the lame kid; he is our neighbour's son, and his mother weaned him when he was a year old, that she might take Alune, and rear her for my daughter-in-law, who was always a very weakly woman, so they are a sort of brother and sister."

"There," thought I, "is a protection provided for my little girl, in case her grandmother should die," but I kept the thought to myself. All this passed as the children were tying the old goats to the stock of a tree, and then coming gayly, and with the steps of little mountaineers, up the wooden stairs which is without the house.

Oh! it was a joyful meeting between me and my little Alune; but as I have made my story longer than I intended already, I shall not enlarge on this part, which I might very well do, nor say what a beautiful collection of mountain herbs, curiously dried and prepared, and laid in a neat portfolio, tied with blue and yellow-twisted worsted, my little Alune presented to me. And how Herman helped the old lady to set out the supper-table

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with the best napery, and all the good things the house would afford, and how we all supped together, and united in the song and prayer of thanksgiving, after supper, in all of which the fine Swiss boy acted his part as a child of the house; but I shall only say, that when I took my leave, I thanked God in my heart, who had put it in my power, an old bachelor as I am, and loving simplicity more than pomp, to put into the hands of the individual who had entertained me, and those who had feasted with me, such a little sum as might add many comforts to a life of humble labour and comparative poverty.

END OF LE BACHEN HOLZLI.

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PROCRASTINATION;

OR,

THE EVIL OF DELAY.

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PROCRASTINATION;

OR,

THE EVIL OF DELAY.

THAT man who is a procrastinator in earthly matters, and who neglects proper attention to his worldly affairs until confusion and ruin ensue, is counted as one without understanding by all who know him; but if *he* may be justly termed a fool who neglects his earthly affairs, how much more so that man who slights the interest of his soul, and thereby incurs the risk of everlasting destruction!

There are few men so hardened as to have determined to slight religion to the end of life. On the contrary, most persons, however ignorant and careless, fill themselves up with the belief that some time will come when they shall repent and turn to God; and though this hour is often put off from day to day, and from month to month, yet there are very few who are not persuaded that it will come at last. There are a thousand excuses which persons make to themselves for not devoting the present time to God: one says, "I am too young;" another says, "I will wait till some sickness or affliction comes upon me;" another says, "I am too busy;" and another says, "Let me alone to-day, and to-morrow I will certainly repent." Now these deceitful hopes, with which men lift themselves up, often rise from false views which they have of their own strength, as if they had power to turn unto God just when they please. Whereas, a truly humble Christian is made sensible that he must be first drawn before he can run after his Lord; hence, like that infirm and impotent person who waited at the Pool of Bethesda, desiring to be thrown into the water at the first motion of the angel, he humbly expecteth to hear the voice of his Lord, and

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is ready to arise and follow him as soon as strength is imparted to him for the purpose.

I am now about to lay before my reader a short history; from which, if duly considered, he may be enabled to judge of the frequent dreadful effects of procrastination in religious matters:—

A few years ago, a poor man of the name of Edward Crawford, lying under sentence of death in one of our country jails, was visited by one of those pious persons who make it their business to console the afflicted and instruct the ignorant. Through the Divine mercy, the conversation of this excellent person was blessed to the poor man; and through his means we have obtained the narrative which we are now about to communicate to our reader.

"I was born," said Edward Crawford, "in the little village of Albrighton, in Shropshire, and my parents being poor, and having many children, I was left much to myself during the younger parts of my life, and cannot call to mind ever having been employed in any other business than in driving the crows from the farmers' fields, or gleaning after my mother in harvest time, till I was as much as eight or nine years of age.

"During this time, I do not recollect being ever taken to church; and, indeed, I suppose that my clothes were such that my mother would have been ashamed to have me seen by the congregation. I had, however, a custom, with certain other idle boys in the village, of playing about the churchyard during service time, and running off to hide myself behind the tombstones whenever the congregation began to move out of the church, of which I was generally apprized in time by a kind of buz or bustle within, which immediately followed the sermon.

"It happened, however, or perhaps it was wisely ordered, I have since thought, though little at that time seemed to spring from it, that as I was playing one summer evening, according to my usual custom, in the churchyard during service, the doors of the church being open, and the weather exceedingly hot, I took it into my head to go into the porch, in order to enjoy the shade; and having seated myself where I could see the clergyman, my attention was, as it were unknown to myself, drawn to his discourse; and though I remember no more of his discourse, yet one expression which he

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used seemed to go to my heart, and has stuck by me in some degree ever since. This sentence was a passage from Scripture, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.' I do not mean to say that I was any the better for hearing this sentence at the time; but, as I before said, these words at the moment seemed to take strong hold of my mind, and the comments of the minister upon them gave me the first notion I ever had of religion: and I can recollect thinking, as I sat on the step of the porch, What, and shall I go to the place of everlasting torments, if I do not seek the favour of God, and if I do not get an interest in the Saviour, and if I spend my time in playing about all day, as I have done, and allow myself in foolish talking and story-telling, and such things as I have practised till now!

"I remember then thinking that I would be a good boy in future, and go to church regularly, and attend the Sunday-school, for there was a Sunday-school as far back as the time I speak of in our parish. Being full of these thoughts, I remained in the church porch till the sermon was over, and walked quietly out of the churchyard with the congregation, and was actually turning my steps towards the house of the vicar, thinking to give my name in as a Sunday scholar, for it was to the vicar the names were to be given; when it came into my mind that the vicar was still in the church, where I had left him baptizing a child; this thought brought me to a stand in the middle of the street; and I was considering whether I should not go back to the gate of the churchyard, when a boy of my acquaintance, who was much bigger than myself, appeared before me, having his hat dressed with wild roses and cowslips.

"The boy no sooner saw me than he called to me across the street, asked me where I had been, adding that he had been seeking me at my father's house.

"'What for?' said I.

"'What for?' returned he. 'Why I want you to come into the woods to look for strawberries; they are as thick as leaves on the bank yonder, on the back of the town.'

"I remember the boy's words as if they had been spoken but yesterday, and also my answer, which was to tell him I could not bear him company, because I had other business in hand: and then whispering in his ear, for by this time I had crossed over the street to him, I

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told him where I had been, what I had heard, and whither I was going.

"'Very good, very good indeed!' he answered, at the same time laughing heartily, 'very good indeed! you can't do better: but I'll tell you what, Ned, it's altogether too soon for you to be thinking of these matters; it will be time enough for a little bit of a lad like you to think about religion twenty years to come;' so saying, he took me by the arm, twirled me round, and led me out with him into the woods, where I soon forgot my good thoughts among the wild strawberries and dog-roses.

"I do not recollect having any return of serious thoughts from that time till as much as a year and a half afterward, when, meeting our minister one evening, he addressed me in a very serious manner, and invited me to his school, pointing out to me the danger of being in ignorance, and a stranger to Christ. He spoke to me to such purpose, that I promised him to come the next Sunday, and actually on the Sabbath morning washed my face and combed my hair with more care than usual, and set out for the school; but when I got into the village, I met a parcel of lads going to slide on a brook above the pool, which is at the back of the vicar's house; and I was so weak and sinful as again to be persuaded by them that it was time enough for such a little lad as I to think of religion. Thus my better thoughts were again driven away; and I continued to reject the means of improvement offered, and to smother the better feelings which from time to time rose in my mind.

"I do not remember, from that time, having any more serious thoughts during my childhood, excepting on occasion of the death of a little brother, whom I dearly loved; and I remember that for some weeks after his death I used often to think of him, and to consider in what state his soul then was. I recollect that I did not doubt of his happiness, and even believed that it was owing to his Saviour. At that period, I had again almost resolved to attend the Sunday-school, which was the only means I had of learning to read; but Sunday after Sunday I put off the execution of this happy project, and so the thought wore away; and after a while, the time came when I was to leave home and go into service, which happened when I was about fifteen years of age.

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'My first and only service was with a farmer, in the parish next to that in which I was born, where I was employed to attend the horses and cattle, and follow the plough. My master was not a religious man, and made it none of his business to see that his servants went to church; I therefore seldom set my foot in a place of worship. However, it happened that on our last wake-Sunday, which falls out in August, some singers coming to our church on the occasion from Wolverhampton, I was tempted to attend evening service; and there I heard a sermon which has, as it were, stuck by me ever since; furnishing subjects of thought many times since, when I would most gladly have forgotten it, if I could. The text was from St. Luke xiv. 18; 'They all, with one consent, began to make excuse.'

"The clergyman having delivered his text, he went on to make this remark:—

"'It is a common error for thoughtless people to believe that it will be time enough for them to think about religion at some future period.' And then he went on much to this purpose,—for, as I said before, I never could put the words of this sermon out of my head: 'This spirit of procrastination is one of the most common errors of sinners, and one of the most successful temptations of Satan. If your conscience,' said he, 'be in some measure awakened, and you feel anxious in any degree for the salvation of your soul, Satan and your own hearts will suggest delay. As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, 'Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.' Acts xxiv. 25. This convenient season, most probably, never arrived to Felix: but,' continued the minister, 'although God has given this solemn warning against delay, and has repeated the important lesson in many parts of his Word, yet many thousands are continually making the same excuse, and thus exposing themselves to everlasting destruction.

"'Tell me, oh man!' proceeded the preacher, 'can you ensure your life for a day, or even for one moment? Let us call to mind the rich man, who, when gazing with delight on his store-houses and barns, said to his soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' But God said unto him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be re-

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quired of thee.' Luke xii. 19, 20. God the Lord may even now be passing the same sentence on some sinner in this congregation, who dares, against his most solemn command, and the warnings of his Word, to put off the concerns of his soul to another day; the Holy Ghost saith, 'To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts' (Heb. iii. 7, 8); if you wait till to-morrow, you will then feel less from this discourse than you have done to-day. Serious thoughts may wear off, and you may be, and most likely will be, 'hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' Heb. iii. 13.

"Much more, which I do not recollect, did this excellent minister say to this purpose: but I remember well the verse with which he concluded,—'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.' Isaiah lv. 6, 7.

"I was to go, after service, down to the village where the wake was kept; but so touched was I by the sermon, that when I came out of church, I quitted the throng as soon as possible, and took my way into a solitary lane, where I spent as much as an hour and a half alone, thinking of the sermon, and making resolutions of immediate reformation; and these resolutions held me all the evening, and I determined, as I lay on my bed, to make a great change in my conduct and behaviour the next day. I thought in my own mind, that I would never enter an alehouse again, or use an oath, or stay away from church, and so forth; but the next day, being the day after the wake, was a kind of holyday with us, and there was to be a famous match of cudgel-playing in the village. I had longed to see this match, though I knew full well how ill such sports agreed with my new resolutions of repentance and amendment.

"I had no notion, however, of seeking help where it might be found; so I yielded to the temptation, and went down to the public house in the evening, in the yard of which this match was to be held: and as I walked along, I remember that I quieted my conscience with these arguments: Well, it is but putting off my repentance one day longer; I am a young man, in the very prime of life, and it will be time enough for me to begin my good course to-morrow.

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"To-morrow, sir, I repeat; but when that morrow came, it found me as a blighted oak; my strength was withered, and my hope gone.

"When I got to the public house, the ground was already cleared for the match, and many, both men and women, gathered together to see the sport. In the humour I then was, I was at first somewhat shocked at the noise and brawls, the oaths and blasphemies, which sounded all about me. Nevertheless, when I had taken a draught of ale, I grew more fit for my company; and, by degrees, forgetting all my better thoughts, I mixed with the crowd, and began to play my part among those who were making sport for the rest.

"It is seldom that sports of this kind end without ill-will; and thus it was with us; the landlord plied us with liquor, and, as we grew warm, we proceeded to use hard words, which words led to blows, and in the madness and fury of passion, I took up a knife, and struck a young man of the company with it, never stopping to consider what might be the consequence of so desperate an action. This young man had been my fellow-servant, and we were known to have borne no good-will towards each other; nevertheless, when I saw him fall, and beheld the blood gushing from his wound, I was filled with horror and amazement, such as I had never before experienced, and would have gladly changed place at that moment with the vilest reptile which crawls on the face of the earth. The poor young man survived the wound I had given him only a very short time; before the doctor, who was instantly sent for, arrived, he expired, and left me to all the dreadful consequences of my crime. It is true, that I had no more idea of being guilty of that action a minute before I committed it, than I now have of being king of England; indeed, few in the company suspected me of any design of committing murder; nevertheless, the ill-will which had been known to exist between me and the unfortunate man whose death I had occasioned, turned against me on my trial, and I was deservedly condemned.

"I can give you no idea of what I suffered when I first found myself under confinement, and in danger of capital punishment. It was then that all my folly in putting off my repentance appeared to me in its strongest point of view, and a kind of despair seized my mind, with such horror and perplexity as I am not able to describe.

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"At this period, I used often to exclaim, Oh, that I had attended a place of worship, or the Sunday-school, or learned to read my Bible when I was a child! I should not now be in such a dreadful situation as I am. Oh, that I had not put off the day of repentance; that I had sought the Lord while he was to be found; that I had called upon him when he was near! In this manner I lamented myself continually, and yet I could see no way in which I might escape from eternal death. Thus the end of my life was fast approaching; my sand was running out; and I knew not where to look for help, terrified and dismayed as I was; yet I seemed to have no power left to repent and to turn to my God, and felt rather inclined to murmur against my heavenly Father, than to take blame to myself, and to charge myself with the consequences of my sins.

"I then would have given all the world, had I possessed it, for those opportunities of improvement which I had despised in my early days; and I frequently said to myself, Could I but once escape the walls of this dungeon, how differently would I spend my life, and how devoted would I be to my God. Then again, the thought would arise, But now it is too late; I have put off my repentance till the time is past, and till hope is gone.

"In this situation I continued for some weeks, and in this situation I should probably have remained until the end, and my soul would have been eternally lost, if the Lord had not had mercy upon me; if he had not sought me out in this dungeon, through the means of his faithful servant, and made me sensible that, vile as I am, there is salvation for me in the blood of Christ.

"The friend who visited me in my distress, indeed, pointed out to me the extreme danger of procrastination, or delaying the concerns of the soul; and this for two reasons,—first, because man's life is uncertain; and, secondly, because repentance is not in any one's power when he pleases; because man, in his natural state, cannot turn and prepare himself to good works, and faith, and calling upon God; therefore it becomes doubly sinful and foolish in any one to resist those calls to repentance, which are made through the medium of God's holy Word, or his ministers, or through any other of his appointed means.

"Nevertheless, this my excellent friend assured me, that there yet remained hope for me, inasmuch as,

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through the forbearance of justice, I was still in the land of prayer, and within the reach of mercy; and thence he took occasion to open before me such a view of Divine mercy, and of all that Christ has done for lost mankind, that he caused a new light to shine on my dark mind, and new hope to break on my distressed soul; insomuch so, that although my sins are as scarlet, I trust that they will be made white as snow, and though red like crimson, yet that they shall be as wool.

"Thus have I been snatched as a brand plucked from the fire, and that mercy is allowed to me which I refused to my unhappy fellow-servant; on that mercy, therefore, I cast myself, pleading the merits of my Saviour, and humbly acknowledging, that had I been cut off in the midst of my sins, and been cast into everlasting fire, I should have been justly dealt by; for 'he that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.'" Prov. xxix. 1.

THE DAY OF LIFE.

THE morning hours of cheerful light
Of all the day are best;
But as they speed their hasty flight,
If every hour is spent aright,
We sweetly sink to sleep at night,
And pleasant is our rest.

And life is like a summer's day,
It seems so quickly past:
Youth is the morning bright and gay,
And if 'tis spent in wisdom's way,
We meet old age without dismay,
And death is sweet at last

END OF PROCRASTINATION.

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THE

MOURNING QUEEN.

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THE

MOURNING QUEEN.

"I DO confidently believe," says Bishop Hall, "that all the particular national churches, throughout the whole Christian world, are no other than sisters; daughters of the same father—GOD; of the same mother—the spiritual Jerusalem, which is from above. Some of them are elder sisters, others younger; some more tall and large-spread, others of less stature; some fairer in respect of holiness of life and orthodoxy of judgment, others fouler in respect of corruptions both of doctrine and manners; *still sisters.*"

This passage in the writings of Bishop Hall entirely agrees with the typical language of Scripture, wherein the universal church is frequently described as a wife or bride, of whom the spouse is Christ the Lord; and the inferior churches are represented as daughters of these glorious parents. These scriptural allusions being borne in mind, I doubt not that what follows will be easily understood.

The time was, and is not long past, when I should have said, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." Rev. xviii. 7. I was then accounted fairest of my mother's children, and the best beloved in the sight of my parents; whereas I am now as "a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, which has been refused." Isa. liv. 6. I am the daughter of Him whose name is incommunicable; of Him to whom all the worship is due of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and the spiritual Zion is my mother. My Father made me to hope and rejoice while I yet hung upon my mother's breast; he washed me in water, and anointed me with oil; he clothed me with broidered work, and shod me

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with badgers' skin; he girded me about with fine linen, and put bracelets on my hands, and a chain on my neck; he fed me with the honey, and wheat, and barm of Judah; and I was exceedingly beautiful, and there were few among the daughters of my mother to be compared with me: inasmuch as the image of my Father was impressed on my features as a seal upon the clay; for my Father had chosen me to be his beloved.

Thus I was formed in comeliness, and arrayed with beauty; and, being exceedingly fair, I was sought by a royal suitor of earthly parentage, who selected me from the midst of my sisters.

My Father bestowed his blessing on our union, and registered the contract in a book of remembrance. Moreover, he caused my mother to endow me with a copy of his Testament, wherein was inscribed his holy will; and this Testament was to serve for a rule of life, and for a memorial. My husband likewise directed a written agreement to be prepared, confirming our holy alliance with high and peculiar privileges. Moreover he set his seal to the scroll, binding himself by an oath to give up his crown, and hazard his life, rather than forsake her whom he had set as a seal upon his heart—as a seal upon his arm. He also issued a decree that, from that time forward, all laws, statutes, or ordinances established by my sisters throughout his realm should be utterly void, and of none effect.* And this he did for the maintenance of peace, and not out of disrespect to my sisters, many of whom are exceedingly fair and beautiful, and much beloved of my Father. And this contract was completed: and it was well and wisely done with respect to all matters of serious import, comporting, in all vital points, with the will of my Father. I was therefore perfectly satisfied, and believed myself established for ever. Nevertheless, some errors which I then thought of little moment crept into our contract, and afterward gave cause for dissatisfaction to various members of my family.

I have an elder sister, and one, alas! who has done so little credit to her family, that some have asserted she is a changeling, and not a real daughter of my parent. Time, however, can alone prove this; and if she be truly a child of my Father, though she be made to

* See Act of Uniformity.

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pass through the fire of affliction, she will assuredly be saved in the end, according to my Father's own declaration: for he has said, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Eph. i. 10, 11.

This my elder sister, though at that time in disgrace with my husband and his counsellors, contrived to interfere in the ceremonials of my marriage, and of my coronation, and in the establishment of my household, and the provisions made for my children. It is her character to be a lover of ornament. She is herself clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and costly array: and in the day in which I was bound to my earthly protector, she bedecked me in some degree according to her own fashion. To the garment of linen, clean and white, in which my Father had attired me, she attached a fringe of gold, with bells which tinkled as I went, and golden pomegranates. Moreover, she bound broad phylacteries on my forehead and my wrists; much against my inclination, as I desired only to be arrayed in the white robe which my Father had given me, and to wear the signet and crown which he had also bestowed upon me. But my spouse being overruled by the persuasions of my elder sister, I was obliged to submit to her dictation. To increase my embarrassment, I had a younger sister, who, disapproving of my marriage altogether, wished not only to tear away the fringes and phylacteries which were attached to my bridal robe, but to clip and curtail the train of the robe itself, and to divest it of its simple folds: and, moreover, she would have robbed me of my beautiful hair, which was the pride and the glory of my husband.

Thus the day of my espousals was imbittered to me by the dissensions of my sisters; and where love, and friendship, and union ought to have existed, there were malice, and rancour, and backbiting, and evil-speaking. Nevertheless, I was strong in the affection of my husband: I was then as "a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall" (Gen. xlix. 22); for I became a fruitful mother, and bore my husband many

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noble sons and beautiful daughters; and many of my sons have grown up to stand high in favour with their heavenly and their earthly Father, and my daughters have become as polished corners of the temple.

Many of my little ones have been required of me in their infancy: these were the loved and favoured ones of my Father, who, because he desired to have them near him, called them to himself, while yet they hung upon my breast. Multitudes of these are now in my Father's house, which is very far off; and there, after the toils and sorrows of the journey, they are received in my mother's arms and comforted. It was a pain to me to part with them, for I should have delighted to nourish and to cherish them: but when I perceived that they pined and sickened in the air of this land, and when the physician admonished me that they must needs be taken away, and be removed into a fresher and a finer air, I yielded with submission, and I trust that I never disputed my Father's will. Yet, before we parted, it was ever my custom to seal them with a signet, which my Father had put into my hand, and to enrol their names in a book of memorial; and this observance, simple as it may appear, offended another of my sisters; and, because I would not accept her counsel, she flew from me in displeasure, and still remains at variance. Thus was I continually troubled with family discord; yet my husband consoled and upheld me, and my sons honoured and respected me, so that I entertained no fears, and my heart was light. Yea, and perhaps at that time my carriage towards my sisters was not exactly what it should have been; neither did I pity them, as I ought to have done, in the days of their affliction and of their depression. Yea, and in those days when the sun shone on me, when I have met them in the street, I have walked scornfully by them; and while I have taken pleasure in exhibiting their faults, I have not taken delight in their good qualities; and I have, moreover, often despised their little ones, and crushed those who were weak among them. My Father, forgive me for these offences, and look on me now in this my hour of distress: for now, in the days of my affliction and my misery, I remember all my pleasant things. I spread forth my hands, and there is none to help me. Lam. i. 7.

My sons—my noble sons! who were once my glory

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and my delight; my precious sons, whom I once esteemed as fine gold, how are they changed! Lam. iv. 2. To them it was appointed to support my authority and maintain my privileges; to read the scroll of my marriage settlement in the ears of the people, and to confirm its authority by reference to the written will of my Father, to which I have ever desired it might conform; in this respect differing from my eldest sister, who has always maintained that her sons had power to enact laws of equal authority with those of our Father, pretending that they had received commission from him so to do.*

It is one of the articles of my settlement, signed and sealed by all my sons, that the written Word of my Father "containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." (Article vi.) And the time was when these my sons would have given up their lives rather than have ceased to uphold my privileges against all adversaries and gainsayers; yea, I could speak of certain of my first-born who, for the love they bore to me, their nursing-mother, were stoned and slain with the sword; and wandered in deserts and in mountains, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; yea, some of them were subjected to fiery trials, to shame, and to reproach, for my sake; yet they came forth as gold from the refiner's fire, and are now as chosen vessels in my Father's house. But, alas! "how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" Lam. iv. 1.

The sons of my advanced age are not like the children of my youth. Where is the zeal, and the devotion, and the love with which my first-born used to comfort and invigorate me? Yet my degenerate children draw nigh to me with their mouth, and swear that they will always give their faithful diligence so to minister to the service of my household as my Father has commanded, and as I and my earthly spouse have received the same, that they may teach my people with all diligence.† Yet, after this solemn oath has passed their lips, and even after they have united in a holy supplication for help from above, to enable them to perform all which

* See Douay Catechism, published by authority in 1826.

† See Ordination Service.

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they have undertaken in such a way as to render their services acceptable in the eyes of my Father, they have utterly neglected their promises; and, ceasing to do justice and judgment, have sought only to feed themselves with the fat of my flocks, and to clothe themselves with the wool of my sheep. Neither have they merely set bounds to their disobedience by neglecting my services, or by performing them in a careless manner: this I might have borne, yea, and have borne for some years past, consoling myself with the hope that these my prodigal sons, who had wasted my substance in idleness and dissipation, might yet turn again and repent, and build up my falling towers and dilapidated palaces, and be enabled to enrich "my windows with agates, and my gates with carbuncles, and set all my borders with pleasant stones." Isaiah liv. 12. But, alas! my hope is deferred, and my heart is sick!

The sloth of my sons has left a door open for the admission of my bitterest enemy, and my sister has stepped into the interior of my domestic circle, and seated herself on the very throne of my husband. And now, already, have I not been made to descend one degree from the royal seat on which I was once enthroned as supreme? and are not my defects made the subject of vulgar discourse? Has not my husband already discerned beauties in another which he believed once to belong only to me? and has he not admitted my enemies into his counsels? and suffered those who hate me to prevail with him to break the seals of our marriage-contract?

My bulwarks shake, my glorious palaces tremble to their foundation; my sons and my daughters look coldly upon me. I sit solitary, who was once surrounded by many children; I am become as a widow, who was once great among the nations, and a princess among the provinces. I weep sore in the night; the tears are on my cheeks. My sons "are become like harts that find no pasture; they are gone without strength before my persecutors." Lam. i. 6. Yet I will still hope. I will call upon my little ones who are rising up, my sons who as yet are as beardless boys, to help me in my distress! Listen to me, my children: you that have been reared in my bosom, hear the words of my prayer, and let them sink deep into your hearts. My prayer is addressed to one that is above, for all human help is now

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vain; and my sin has been, that I have sought that aid which is of man, instead of directing my voice to the everlasting hills, from whence cometh certain help. Again hearken, then, my infant sons, to the words of my prayer, and let your hearts and voices re-echo back the holy sound.

"Come, Holy Ghost, their souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire:
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.

"Thy blessed unction, from above,
Is comfort, life, and fire of love;
Enable, with perpetual light,
The dulness of their blinded sight.

"Anoint and cheer their soiled face
With the abundance of thy grace;
Keep far our foes, give peace at home—
Where Thou art Guide, no ill can come.

"Teach them to know the Father, Son,
And Thee of both, to be but One;
That, through the ages all along,
This may be their endless song:—

"Praise to Thy eternal merit;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

The foundation of my authority standeth sure, my sons; it is built on that of eternal truth—it cannot be shaken; therefore fear not, but gather yourselves around me. Be ye clothed in the garments of salvation; put on the whole armour of God. Maintain my cause, for it is a holy one; and plead with your earthly father, that he should take me again to his heart, and admit no rival to partake his throne with me.

If some human errors, some mortal spots, have mingled themselves with my character, help me, my children, to obtain a deliverance from them: but tear me not from my throne, nor rob me of my crown, nor despoil me of my jewels; but remember my services and my labours of old, how I have loved, and reared, and protected many children, nourishing them from my own bosom, and bearing them in my arms, "as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings." Deut. xxxii. 11.

To you then, my sons, my infant sons, I extend my hands; for you I make my prayer to my Father, that the same Spirit which animated your elder brothers, in the early days of m exaltation, may be bestowed on

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you; that you may plead for me with your earthly father; that you may set all my perfections in beautiful array before him; that you may call to his mind the articles of my marriage covenant; and that you may neither rest day nor night until you have restored me to my former glory, and made it appear, that although I may not be wholly without blemish, yet, inasmuch as I profess to be regulated in all things according to the will of my Father who is above, I am a faithful guide, and have never failed to ensure the everlasting happiness of him who has confided his interests to my keeping. And as I have prayed, and lifted up my imploring voice for my sons, so will I pray for him whom my Father appointed to be my earthly protector. O my Father, have mercy upon him, and bring to his mind the kindness of his youth—the love of his espousals—when I was brought to him from my Father's house, and set beside him on his throne. Then did he count me better than rubies; "I was by him, as one brought up with him: I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Prov. viii. 30. In sickness and sorrow I was his consolation; when worn with pain and care, he rested on my bosom, and was ready to forsake all things rather than give me up. Then was he the beloved of my Father, and blessings from on high descended upon the crown of his head. Hear then my prayer, O my Father! and restore my husband as aforetime. If I have deserved thy displeasure, chasten and correct me, yet bring me not down into the dust. O set not the point of thy sword against my gates; spare my children, and let not my little ones be given unto another. O my Father, help me, and renew thy covenant with me: then shall I remember the instructions which thou gavest me in the days of my youth: I shall walk humbly; I shall be assisted to put off the vain ornaments with which my sister arrayed me in the day of my espousals; and then will my beauty appear as aforetime in the eyes of my husband and my children. Then shall I be a crown of glory in the hand of my Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of my God. I shall "no more be termed forsaken; neither shall my land any more be termed desolate: but I shall be called Hephzibah, and my land Beulah: for my Lord shall delight in me." Isaiah lxii. 4.

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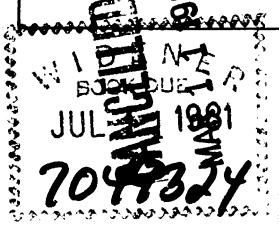

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